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THE 1924 WORKERS' INCIDENT AT RUIIMVELDT BRITISH GUIANA AND THE
DEVELOPMENT OF WORKING PEOPLE'S ORGANISATION

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SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK, 1997.

ABSTRACT

In 1924 stevedores and other categories of dock workers in Georgetown, British Guiana, went on strike in response to a call by the British Guiana Labour Union (BGLU). In a demonstration of solidarity, estate workers from several sugar plantations along the East Bank of Demerara embarked upon a march to Georgetown. At Plantation Ruimveldt, the workers confronted a detachment of police officers and members of the military forces. As a result of an order to shoot into the crowd thirteen workers were killed and twenty-four wounded.

The dissertation has been able to establish the '1924 Workers' Incident at Ruimveldt' as a watershed in Guianese working people's struggle by highlighting its prominence among other moments of overt resistance through its impact upon workers' organisation. The significance of the Incident is also brought out in the new relationship which developed between the British government, the Colonial Office and the British TUC, on the one hand, and the Guianese labour leaders on the other.

In pursuit of this task, the dissertation addresses the following: the organisational structures of the working people at the formal and non-formal or 'street corner' levels; the leadership which emerged from the ranks of the working people and the middle class; the impact of 'grassroots' organisation in fostering working people's consciousness and co-operation among members of the major racial sections in the country; and their attempts to establish links with progressive individuals and organisations within Guiana and throughout the international community.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writing of this dissertation was undertaken to investigate and present information in relation to twentieth century workers' resistance to colonial domination in Guyana. Much of the work done in this area is in the form of seminar and occasional papers. These, because they address specific issues, present an incomplete picture of the nature and moments of resistance in the country.

In this dissertation, much attention is given to the decades of the 1920s and 30s, however, chapter iii examines the nature of the colonial relationship between Guiana and Britain which gave rise to the developments in this period. The documents lodged at the PRO and the Modern Records Centre, proved to be valuable in the reconstruction of trends and events. Also of value are Ashton Chase's contribution to trade unionism, for the wealth of information he presented on the subject in the context of Guyana, made possible through his long association with the trade union movement. Nehusi and Rodney who conducted extensive research relating to working people's development in Guyana also provided valuable sources

Significantly, this dissertation attempts to reconstruct the events of the Ruimveldt Workers' Incident in 1924. This task is preceded by an examination of the period before the Incident to determine the nature of economic development and social relationship, also, the level of working people's organisation since the era of African enslavement. In addition, an investigation of the development of larger and better organised trade unions which played a central role in providing the

organisational structures for working people's participation in the political process. Finally, 'Dependency' and 'World Systems' theoretical perspectives are employed to locate the developments researched, in the *global* pattern of production and exchange.

In completing this project, the writer wishes to acknowledge the contribution and support of the following individuals: Dr. Winston Mc Gowan, Prof. Mary Noel Menezes, Dr. James Rose and other members of the History Department of the University of Guyana. Their encouragement and guidance aided in the disciplined way this research was undertaken.

My wife who supported me throughout. Her input in word processing (which was the source of lively debate) and proof reading of the text, proved invaluable.

My mother, brothers and sisters in Guyana, London, the USA, Grenada and Canada, for their continued support and their unwavering belief in my ability to successfully complete this dissertation.

Also colleagues at the Cyril Potter College of Education (Guyana), Jennings Secondary School (Antigua), St Mary's College (St Lucia), and the Caribbean Examinations Council, who encouraged me all the way.

The former Archivist, H.W.L. Payne and Staff of the Guyana National Archives, for their co-operation and valuable suggestions.

Aunt Sheila, Kimani, Raphael, Simba, Rochelle, Jenny and others in London who assisted me during my stay in the United Kingdom.

Finally, Shevlyn, Osei, Esan, Simba and the other children

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of Guyana whose task it is to ensure that the working people did not labour in vain. The writer acknowledges complete responsibility for the material and interpretations presented in this dissertation.

Silvius E. Wilson
Peckham, July 1997.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACP	: African Caribbean Pacific
BGCGWTU	: British Guiana Congress of General Workers Trade Union
BGEIA	: British Guiana East Indian Association
BGLU	: British Guiana Labour Union
BGTA	: British Guiana Teachers Association
BGTUC	: British Guiana Trade Union Council
BGWL	: British Guiana Workers League
BGCA	: British Guiana Clerks Association
BGSPA	: British Guiana Sugar Producers Association
BLP	: British Labour Party
CTS	: Colonial Trading School
CC	: Combined Court
CP	: Court of Policy
CAC	: Colonial Advisory Committee
CO	: Colonial Office
CARICOM	: Caribbean Community
ECLA	: The Economic Commission for Latin America
ECD	: East Coast Demerara
EBD	: East Bank Demerara
FR	: Financial Representative
GIWU	: Guiana Industrial Workers Union
IAG	: Immigration Agent General
ICS	: Institute of Commonwealth Studies
ICFTU	: International Confederation of Free Trade Unions

IFTU : International Federation of Trade Unions
ILO : International Labour Organisation
IFTU : International Federation of Trade Unions
LCP : League of Coloured People
LSI : Labour and Socialist International
MCC : Member of the Combined Court
MCP : Member of the Court of Policy
MLC : Member of the Legislative Council
MPCA : Manpower Citizens' Association
MRC : Modern Records Centre (University of Warwick)
NAG : National Archives of Guyana
NPC : Negro Progress Convention
NICs : Newly Industrialised Countries
OPEC : Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PAC : Political Affairs Committee
PPP : People's Progressive Party
PRO : Public Record Office
PNP : People's National Party
PWD : Public Works Department
SS : Secretary of State
SOAS : School of Oriental and African Studies
TUC : Trade Union Congress
TWA : Trinidad Workingmen's Association
UNIA : Universal Negro Improvement Association

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WCD : West Coast Demerara

WBD : West Bank Demerara

WCB : West Coast Berbice

WPEO : Women's Political and Economic Organization

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

They come treading on the mud floor of the year mingling
with dark heavy water
And the sea sound of the eyeless flitting bat,
O long is the march of men and long is the life...

Penguin

Martin Carter, '*Universal Hunger*' in Paul Burnett (ed.)
The Penguin Book of Caribbean Verses in English.
~~Suffolk: Rowland Phototypesetting Ltd., 1988.~~

The decades of the 1920s and 30s were of particular significance to the history of working people's development in Guiana. [1] This period witnessed the emergence of the East Indians, former indentured labourers, as free agents taking an active role in the political life of the county of their adoption. Together with the Africans, they constituted new social groups responding to different forms of economic activities and political challenges.

Throughout the decades, members of these groups demonstrated that the same passion which created and sustained the sugar industry and battled against the elements in an endless struggle to humanise [2] the coastal region, had brought together their diverse cultures. Sometimes this was a conscious development. Often, however, it was achieved as a result of their desire to overcome inequality and oppression which they experienced in the society. [3]

This period was also important for other reasons. Among these was the entry of a number of Africans and East Indian representatives in the legislature. This was achieved and supported by the emergence of a black and coloured middle class which provided leadership for the struggle. [4]

'Formal' participation in politics was complemented by an equally significant 'non-formal' political process involving the

vast majority of the working people. This process was characterised by house meetings and street corner gatherings. Such action was central to the workers' struggle in a society where the majority were almost always excluded from the franchise and representation in the legislature. Organising at the 'non-formal' level was their attempt to influence the decision making process.

These activities climaxed in a series of strikes and workers' uprisings in Georgetown (the capital) and on several sugar estates throughout the country, during the mid twenties and thirties. Resulting from these activities, larger and better organised workers' organisations developed. Further, 'Labour Advisers' were appointed in the colony and several West Indian territories. In addition, active support was given by the Colonial Office for the workers' pursuit of collective bargaining. Such support was part of an attempt to influence the nature of labour demands by giving attention to working people's claims against the employers.

The response of the Colonial Office in appointing Labour Advisers was important in the sense that these officials were in a position to evaluate the needs of the workers. In addition, by the 1930s, it was obvious to the British government that the workers in Guiana and throughout the West Indies, were effectively organised and poised to accomplish their objectives of increased wages and fostering acceptable labour relations, through resistance. The appointment of Labour Officials was largely an attempt by the Colonial Office to closely monitor labour developments in the region and, where possible, channel this development in a direction predetermined by the British

government.

These developments are directly relevant to the main focus of this dissertation, which is the workers' Incident in 1924 at Ruimveldt, British Guiana, and the wider struggle waged by the working people to establish workers' organisations in their quest for adequate wages and a 'decent' and acceptable livelihood. Although the Ruimveldt Incident and the regional risings of the 30s are expressions of a common tradition of working people's struggle, the factors which gave rise to these incidents are peculiar to the conditions which prevailed in the various territories of the region and the attitudes of the officials to working people's development. Therefore, central to this dissertation are the organisational arrangement and the factors which contributed to the workers display of unity in their challenge to imperial hegemony and capitalist exploitation.

The significance of the Ruimveldt Incident can be seen in its popularity. For the first time in the history of the country such a large group of workers, from different regions, came together in struggle demanding increased wages and improved working conditions. In addition, the activities of the workers were co-ordinated by the British Guiana Labour Union, [BGLU] which was a registered union and recognised as the official bargaining agency for the Georgetown dock workers.

The Incident demonstrated that although a homogeneous working class did not develop in Guiana by the 1920s, organisation 'beyond employment' aided in working people's solidarity. Citizens- male and female, old and young, city and rural dwellers-came together in support of the demonstration at

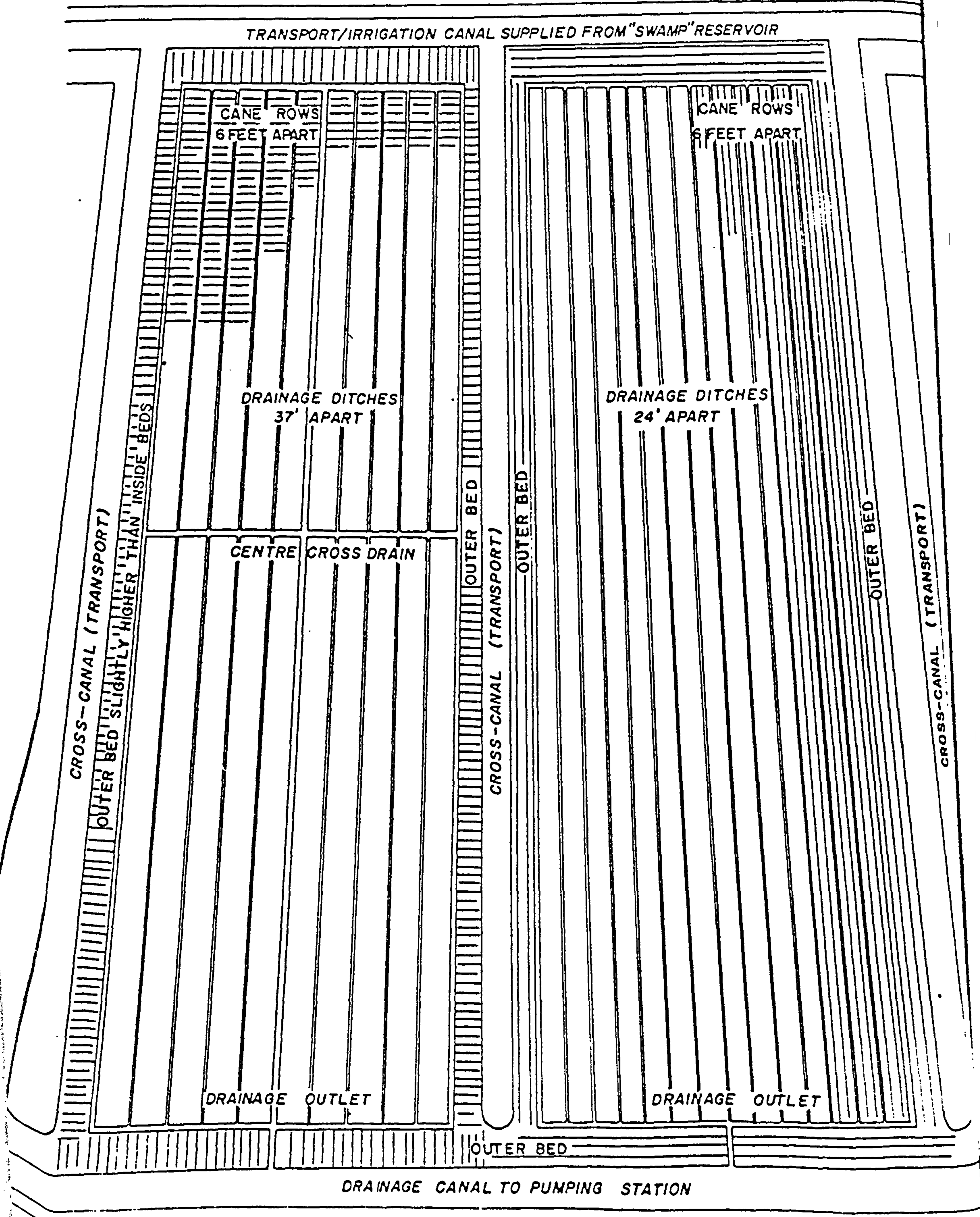
Ruimveldt. This demonstrated that it was not just the compulsion of economic relations which maintained the subjugation of workers to capitalism. [5] The Incident brought together working people from various cultural and ethnic background because production also entails social reproduction, thus workers and other members of the community were equally affected by capitalist exploitation.

The activities of the BGLU and the British Guiana East Indian Association [BGEIA] aided in organisation at the community level during 1924. They also provided the structure and leadership for the continuation of the struggle at the extra-parliamentary forum throughout the 20s and 30s. One demonstration of this was the way they mobilised mass support for middle class politicians who were willing to present working people's issues in the legislature.

The main activities were concentrated in Georgetown, and Plantation Ruimveldt, bordering the city to the south. In addition, striking workers from other plantations along the East Bank, such as Providence, Grove and Diamond, were also involved. The capital and the plantations are located on the coastal plain or coastland, which is situated on the north-eastern part of the country and borders the Atlantic Ocean-see maps. [6] The nature of the soil and the 'build' of this area made it attractive to the European settlers after unsuccessful attempts in several hinterland locations. [7] Over the decades, the coastal region emerged as the most populated area of the country. Here, also, can be found almost all the commercially cultivated areas and the major industries, with the exception of those related to bauxite

CANEFIELD LAYOUTS IN BRITISH GUIANA

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"ENGLISH" LAYOUT
OLD STYLE

"ENGLISH" LAYOUT
NEW STYLE

mining and the extraction of precious minerals.

The background to the Incident is that of a colonial society in which the Guianese social system was dominated economically, politically and culturally by the colonising European (British) society. This domination also informed the nature of development in Guiana and the links which were established between the colony and the mother country.

Guiana emerged as a 'hinterland' of exploitation where all aspects of economic activities formed a direct extension of the economy of Britain. The colony's main economic function during the 1920s was to produce sugar and its by-products for metropolitan consumption, and also to act as an *entrepot* for trade to third countries. It formed part of the overseas empire of the metropolis. The source of its entrepreneurship, finance and the locus of key decisions were metropolitan.

The pattern of development which emerged was unequal. Most of the resources were invested to promote the cultivation and export of sugar. This resulted in developmental projects being concentrated within the estates (point of production) and in areas in and around the city (point of export). Residents outside these areas subsisted on part-time work on the estates and small scale cultivation and trade in village communities. Further, fluctuations in the fortunes of sugar significantly affected the level of employment and the standard of living of the working people.

For several generations, the enslaved Africans and East Indian indentured immigrants who comprised the majority of the inhabitants, toiled to produce wealth via the process of

production. For just as many generations, expatriates from Europe, who constituted the ruling class under the colonial regime, have appropriated almost all of the wealth and shipped it overseas, leaving its creators with just enough to guarantee their survival in order that they may continue to labour in the production of wealth for these foreign owners of the means of production. [8]

Although Africans and East Indians laboured and suffered under this system, this form of exploitation, in the Guianese context, did not begin with these groups. There was the almost total extermination of the *First People* as a result of introduced European diseases and a rigid work regime in the mines and plantations. [9] This was followed by a system of European indentured labourers and eventually chattel slavery involving enslaved Africans. East Indians, Chinese and Portuguese were introduced to Guiana under a system of contracted labour.

The dissertation will show that although the working people laboured and produced under work regimes with different labels, there was a common element which persisted in the attitude of European employers towards labour. For example, several decades after the legal termination of African enslavement, Tinker made the observation that

The planters of the Caribbean...thought only in terms of a slave system: they could not think beyond that system, and they did not want to go beyond. The system was theirs—they were the masters...Sugar was what gave meaning to the Caribbean. Sugar dictated the economic structure, the political structure, and the social structure. [10]

The resulting monoculture economy which developed in Guiana, created serious problems for the planters and the working people.

The planters found themselves in mounting debt and sometimes outright bankruptcy [11] when conditions, locally or in Europe, caused the price of sugar and its by-products to decline. Such uncertainty in the fortune of sugar and the absence of a viable alternative to the industry, through the underdevelopment of other economies, gave rise to a Guianese society characterised by dilapidated tenements and 'logies' [12] housing starving, angry workers, bereft of social services and the most elementary physical amenities. The dissertation demonstrates how these conditions, along with the oppressive laws and practices, contributed to the periodic eruption of people's revolts against the system.

Much of the expressions of resistance began with the workers' attempts to organise their working relations in such a way as to yield the best returns for effort. When they were free from the shackles of enslavement and the restrictions imposed by indentureship, the organisational forms of their struggle included the formation of labour unions and participation in the national political struggle.

The dissertation argues that the Ruimveldt Incident was an expression of 'class' struggle. The similarities in experiences and a common response to planter and capitalist exploitation, brought the working people of Guiana together in struggle. Factors such as shared work experience on the plantations and the process of *creolization*, [13] support this analysis and, at the same time, countering the pluralist type arguments [14] that present such incidents in different terms.

The main actors involved in the Incident were the Governor

and the Colonial Civil Service, [15] the employers (predominantly planters and merchants), [16] the dock workers in Georgetown, (comprising mainly of Africans) and the estate workers from the plantations along the East Bank (the majority of whom were East Indians.) In this dissertation, the term '*working people*' is used when referring to members of the African and East Indian racial sections of the community.

Given the nature of the evolution of the Guianese working people, attempts to employ the concept 'class' as described by Karl Marx, as a way of classifying this group, pose problems to political theorists. It is not the purpose of this thesis to offer a comprehensive review of the concept of 'class.' Rather, the analysis will demonstrate the applicability of neo-Marxist concepts of 'class' as outlined most effectively by Edward Thompson and also comments made on this concept by G.E.M. De Ste. Croix. In line with these views, class should not be regarded as a 'structure' or a 'category' but as a historical phenomenon unifying a number of disparate and seemingly unconnected events, both in the realm of material experience and consciousness. [17]

Class, which is essentially a relationship, is the collective social expression of the fact of exploitation, the way in which exploitation is embodied in a social structure. In this context, exploitation is seen as the appropriation of part of the product of the labour of others: " in a commodity- producing society this is the appropriation of what Marx called 'surplus value' " [18]

The individuals who constitute a *class* are often identified by their position in the whole system of social

production defined according to their relationship (primarily in terms of the degree of ownership or control) to the conditions of production (that is the means and labour of production) and to other classes. Legal position (constitutional rights) is one of the factors that may help to determine class. The extent to which this is so depends upon how far it affects the type and degree of exploitation practiced or suffered. [19]

Therefore, ^{as this} class relationship must always be embodied in real people and in a real context. In this process, Thompson notes:

...class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs. The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born-or enter involuntarily. [20]

A class is born when such a group, in the process of struggle, becomes conscious of itself in society in these ways. Its members begin to recognise and articulate both the relationship among themselves which make them a group, and their difference with other social groups or class. This latter relation is often characterised by tension or even open hostility, although it is not unusual for a class alliance to be formed for mutual benefit. The distinctiveness of a particular class is also enhanced by its culture, [21] that is in its widest sense the dynamic expression of relationships, both between people individually, and classes. In this process factors such as workers' interaction at the place of production, collective activities in the villages and socialising at religious gatherings and social organisation, also constitute the culture

of the people.

The concept of class and class formation as propagated by Marx has been adopted and modified by many writers in the neo-Marxist tradition. For example, the role of class has been examined by Rodney in the African and Caribbean setting; [22] Cardoso and Faletto in their writings on Latin American development and underdevelopment; [23] and Cabral on the liberation struggles in West Africa. [24] These and other writings on the subject have been able to illustrate the nature and role of social classes in various societies against a backdrop of changing economic relations and the widening scope of international trade.

Themes of the Dissertation.

The workers of Guiana were imported from different areas of the world. Africans came from continental Africa- mainly West Africa, the Chinese from the Straits Settlements- (Singapore), and the Portuguese from the island of Madeira. Africans and East Indians comprised the majority of the workers on the plantations. Members of these groups brought aspects of their culture to their country of adoption.

The circumstances surrounding the introduction of the immigrants often resulted in African racial confrontation. Africans were the first group to emerge as 'free' workers in the society. They were actively involved in a struggle against the planters' attempt to keep wages low by increasing the labourforce. It was in this context that African workers opposed Indian immigration. Further, differences in culture constituted obstacles in the way of working class unity across ethnic lines.

[25] Such contradictions were supported and even encouraged through racial stereotyping and other devices adopted by the planters, in order to keep the work force divided. In addition, the legal restrictions imposed by the indentureship system contributed to keeping members of the racial groups socially isolated for much of the period during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

However, this dissertation will also show that during the Incident in 1924, the workers, irrespective of race, converged to wage a common struggle against their employers. This was partly due to the growing effects of *creolization* on the workers' consciousness of their common source of exploitation.

According to Rodney:

Taken in its broadest sense, the 'culture' of the racial fractions of the working people included their work environment and their response to capital at the point of production. In these critical areas Africans and free Indians were on common ground." [26]

Africans and East Indians were employed at the same tasks on the plantations. They often worked side by side as members of the same gang. They faced the same vexations from overseers *aback* [27] and at the pay table.

Besides, residential separation must not obscure the fact that each group at different times came to understand what it meant to be at the total mercy of the planters in the plantation logies of the 'Nigger-yard' and 'Bound-yard.' [28]

Equally significant in the analysis of the protest action, is the response of the colonial government. The Governor's response to news of the strike and demonstration; the deployment

of the military forces; the employers' response to labour demands, their attitude to labour leaders; and the Coroner's report; combined to present a revealing picture of the official attitude to working people's development. Central to this was the role of the Colonial Office. The dissertation explores the direction given by this Office and also its role in the evolution of Colonial Policy to guide and regulate developments within Guiana and other territories in the Caribbean. It will also examine the perception of the workers, and in particular union leaders, of this Office as an extension of and, in many ways, one that was superior to the authority of the Colonial Administration in Guiana.

Closely associated with these developments was the workers' quest to establish and legalise trade union activities in the country. Union leaders, through the Colonial Office and sometimes directly, established contact with the British TUC in an effort to link their struggles with the British labour movement and also to solicit the support of officials of the TUC and Labour Members of Parliament in their quest to establish trade unions. Legislation regulating trade union activities and other aspects of colonial law making and enforcement had to be authorised by the Secretary of State through the Colonial Office.

The central role of the Colonial Office was also evident in matters relating to the economic development of the colony. Loans and grants for developmental projects were recommended by this Office. Governors wishing to explore the economic potential of the colony, had to get the Secretary of State's permission. The value of Grant-in-Aid of development provided through the

Colonial Development Fund to aid colonial development projects, was regulated by the Colonial Office.

The influence which the planters exercised over the process of government and many other aspects of life in the colony was made possible through the fact that they were perceived as upholding the interests of the Colonial Office, and that of the British government, within the colony. These interests were closely related to the furtherance of English culture and supremacy throughout the colonial world.

The resulting relationship which developed between colony and mother country revealed strong ties of dependence and interdependence. The main economic activities, centred around sugar cultivation, were conducted to satisfy an external market. Decisions relating to diversification and even the modernisation of the dominant industry were in the hands of the overseas investors (the West Indian lobby). These decisions were also strongly influenced by foreign demands, including international conditions, such as a change in market demand, wars or even a change in European consumption patterns. Such developments occasioned a significant impact on the colonial economy and hence the fortunes of the working people.

Economies outside of the realm of sugar also came under the control of the mother country through the exercise of monopolistic control in the exploitation and marketing of products such as petroleum, bauxite and precious minerals. These were shipped abroad and the profits ended up in London or other European capitals. In addition, restrictions were placed upon the exploitation of these resources by 'non-British' companies

because of their strategic and military importance.

This relationship resulted in Guiana, throughout the colonial period, failing to develop the vast potential of her natural and other resources. The colony, from the advent of the Europeans, was dominated by the plantation as the main economic unit. The plantations were linked to the mercantile systems of Western Europe (in which each European nation attempted to monopolise the shipment and sale of commodities produced in the colonies) by links which ensured their growth but also prevented their alteration in terms of the internal needs of the society. [29]

The 'special form of development' which emerged in the ex-colonies of Europe, was the subject of numerous theories of development. In this dissertation, an attempt is made to apply some of the ideas of the 'dependency' theory and the 'world systems' analysis in an effort to make a contribution to the search for a clearer understanding of the impact of colonialism on the development of Guyana.

Dependency analysis emerged as an influential branch of development economics in the late 1960s. [30] Essentially, this theory attempts to explain the conditions under which the historical relations between the now developed countries (centre) and the former colonies (periphery) have been dictated and dominated by countries of the centre.

Another aspect considered is the development of trade unionism in a colonial context. An important part of this theoretical approach is derived from the writings on trade unions and workers' resistance in Latin America and Africa. [31] These

studies focus upon '*labour relations*,' a term which subsumes but also broadens the traditional theme of industrial relations. [32] Such approaches explore systems of labour control which determine strategies of labour resistance. In this 'broad' approach, strikes are only one form of resistance which is particularly visible and often highly effective. However, just as important, are the other less overt forms of resistance- such as sabotage and acts of arson. These acts, and others not encompassed by the traditional conception of industrial relations, [33] are usually committed by individuals or small groups as part of a complement to the wider workers' struggle. Covert forms of resistance, played a significant role in the activities of the Ruimveldt Incident.

There is still much debate in relation to the nature of 'dependency' and 'world systems' analysis. Also, because of the distinctive nature of the ex-colonial states of the so called 'Third World,' it is difficult to formulate a 'general' theory of trade unionism which applies to every country of this region. However, through the historical approach that is adopted, it is hoped that this dissertation makes a contribution towards clarifying the nature of the colonial relationship between Guiana and Britain.

In relation to trade union development, the dissertation adds to the existing literature on trade unionism in Guiana by exploring the evolution of workers' organisation from the era of enslavement. It also opens up the debate based upon pursuing an analysis which captures the more complex social realities of the Guianese society.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

Chapter II

This chapter examines the industrial relations literature in an attempt to locate the development of trade unionism in Guiana within the international trend of working people's organisation. Studies on trade union development in Africa and Latin America proved to be helpful and relevant. Related literature is analysed to establish the current state of research on resistance and trade unionism in Guiana and the English-speaking Caribbean.

The second part of the chapter presents the main tenets of 'Dependency' and 'World Systems.' The main arguments presented in these theories proved valuable in the explanations derived from the historical approach adopted in the analysis and reconstruction of the issues and events under investigation.

Chapter III

In this chapter the focus is upon Guiana as a colonial entity within the British Empire. Factors in Europe such as the British industrial thrust and competition from continental rivals were critical in shaping the commercial and related activities between the mother country and her colonies.

An important feature of the colonial relationship, was the way the metropolis attempted to influence every aspect of life within the colony. This was manifested in the widespread programme of Anglicization in colonial culture, education, the political system, and relations among the ethnic sections of the working people. The mother country was able to impose her will on the colonised through the influence the Secretary of State

exercised over colonial issues. Within the colony, the presence of the Governor and the promotion of a 'middle class' also aided in the protection of the interests of the white ruling class and the implementation of the metropolitan will.

Chapter IV

Chapter four concentrates upon the evolution of working people's organisations in Guiana, from 'friendly societies' and 'work gangs' to the establishment of the British Guiana Labour Union (BGLU). In this process, the workers demonstrated their ability to establish useful alliance within and outside their ranks. United in struggle, they forged strong units in the work environment and the village communities through sharing of information and devising strategy to resist planter domination in the promotion of their own interests.

The chapter also examines the role of individuals such as Marcus Garvey and also international organisations in the mobilisation of workers in Guiana. Complementing this movement were the activities of the BGLU and the British Guiana East Indian Association (BGEIA) in providing leadership and raising working people's consciousness in the period before the workers' Incident.

Chapter V

This chapter is a reconstruction of the events of the Workers' Incident during March and April 1924. Central to this chapter is the activities of the striking workers, including female domestics and unemployed workers of the city who were not 'financial' members of the BGLU.

The activities of the Georgetown dock workers were

complemented by the decision of the East Bank estate workers to organise a strike and march to the city to coincide with the strike action in Georgetown, in a show of solidarity in their mutual quest for a 'living wage' and social justice.

The chapter also illustrates the way the planters and merchants negotiated with the workers' representatives and the swift military response to the incident. Aspects of this response include the imposition of martial law and the partiality of the 'official' version of the incident.

Chapter VI

This chapter identifies the immediate impact of the incident on the administration of the colony and upon labour relations. The first part of the chapter examines the official reaction to the incident and the attempts made by the Colonial Officials to justify the actions of the Police and military personnel.

This is followed by an examination of the reaction of workers and employers to the events. Attention is drawn to the workers' resolve to continue acts of sabotage upon the property of the white ruling class and a general reluctance to respond to the call by the BGLU for a resumption of work. This was a direct reaction to the employers' refusal to concede wage increase^s and their strategy of victimising workers for their role in the protest.

Chapter VII

Chapter seven explores some of the long-term implications of Ruimveldt Incident on workers organisation during the late 1920s and 30s. A significant development during this period was

the attempt by the BGLU to extend its influence among the various sections of the working people and also Critchlow's (the founder of the union) role in initiating a regional and international appeal in an attempt to legalise trade unionism in Guiana. The influence of the British TUC and the British Labour Party is given some attention. This period also witnessed an attempt by the BGLU and the BGEIA to continue the struggle at the extra-parliamentary level.

The final section examines the political thrust of the struggle in the working people's attempt to secure greater representation in the local legislature. Aiding this process were people's organisation at the community level, the victory of the Popular Party at the 1926 general election, and the activities of the British Guiana Workers League (BGWL) and the Manpower Citizens Association (MPCA.)

Chapter VIII

This chapter brings together the major themes of the dissertation to establish the role of the Ruimveldt Incident in workers' organisation across ethnic and geographic boundaries in their quest to combat dependency and exploitation. Attention is also given to the complex nature of labour organisation in Guiana and its relationship to the new international labour studies. Aspects of this include an investigation 'beyond employment' to reveal the interaction of groups in the cultural sphere and the role of kinship and gender within a framework of a changing labour process. In addition, the role of new social movement and the complex nature of terms such as class, peasantry and worker.

FOOTNOTES

1. In this dissertation *Guiana or British Guiana* will be used when referring to the country before May 26, 1966, the date of 'Flag and Anthem Independence.' After that date, the spelling was changed to *Guyana*.

2. The early Dutch 'trading posts' were initially established in the of the colony, largely to facilitate trade with the 'First People' who occupied these areas. The Dutch agricultural pursuit, was carried on within a belt that lay approximately thirty to one hundred miles upriver. However, the trend during the second half of the eighteenth century was that of a coastal reclamation and settlement. Because of the low-lying nature of this area, an elaborate system of drainage and irrigation had to be erected. The settlers constantly improved their techniques of 'poldering'- a system involving the draining of swamps and wetlands lands (through a system of dams and canals) in order to facilitate the cultivation of crops and the erection of dwellings. See Walter Rodney, A History of the Guyanese Working People 1881-1905. (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1981). pp. 1-18.

3. This feature was noted by Pope in relation to textile workers in Southern USA. See Liston Pope, Millhands and Preachers: A Study of Gastonia. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942). p. 213.

4. Middle class is used synonymously with '*Petite Bourgeoisie*.' Also, in the Guiana context, clear distinction existed between the upper and lower middle class. The upper middle class consisted largely of medical doctors, lawyers, leading local civil servants and the large farmers and businessmen of the non-plantation sector of the economy. This group had a greater degree of accumulation and had acquired more of the values of the dominant English culture. Both rendered them more interested in preserving the system rather than changing it. These inclinations resulted in great tension between this group and the lower middle class which consisted of teachers, headteachers, parsons, village councillors, overseers and chairmen, small-medium farmers, factory engineers, pan boilers, painter-contractors, master wheelwright junior civil servants and others in similar capacities. See for example K.Marx and F.Engels, The Communist Manifesto. (Penguin Classics, 1986.) p. 88; Rodney, A History of... p. 202.; and Kimani Nehusi, "The Development of Political Organisation and Political Consciousness in British Guiana, 1870-1964: The Conscientizacao of the Middle Class and Masses." Ph.D. Dissertation, University College, London, 1989. p. 24.

5. Ronaldo Munck, The New International Labour Studies: An Introduction (London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1988.) p. 210, see also N. Redclift and E. Mingione, "Introduction: *Economic Restructuring and Family Practices*' in Redclift and Mingione, (eds.) Beyond Employment: Household, Gender and Subsistence (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985.) p. 1.

6. See maps on pp. 5 and 6, showing the area occupied by the sugar plantations along the Coastal Plain during 1924.

7. See footnote 2.

8. See Nehusi, Ph.D. Dissertation.

9. During the early years of European colonisation, large sections of the 'native population' were enslaved. For a discussion of the impact of Spanish colonisation on members of these groups, see Lydia Potts, The World Labour Market: A History of Migration. (London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1990.) pp. 17-26.

10. Hugh Tinker, A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920. {Second Edition} (London: Hansib Publishing Ltd., 1993). p. 3.

11. Alan H. Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves: The Political Economy of British Guiana, 1838-1904. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972). For a discussion of this situation see chapter 5.

12. Barrack type dwellings used for housing enslaved Africans. These were passed on to East Indian immigrant workers.

13. This term refers to an 'indigenizing' experience and it encompassed all racial groups. 'Creolization' is not a simple process of acculturation to the dominant culture, but involves two major processes: firstly, the creation of area of common culture corresponding to the social relations in which people of varying ethnic groups are involved; secondly, the stressing of differences between the groups identified as 'racial' groups. Thus creole culture, while encouraging some level of common cultural participation, also emphasised cultural differences and resulted in the participation of socially exclusive groups at every level of society. See Stuart Hall, " *Pluralism, Race and Class in Caribbean Society*." in Race and Class in Post-Colonial Society (Paris 1977.), also Brian L. Moore, Race, Power and Social Segmentation in Colonial Society: Guyana After Slavery 1838-1891. (Philadelphia: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1992.) p. 23.

14. The 'pluralist' concept has been applied to the Caribbean plantation society by writers such as Braithwaite, R.T. Smith and Beckford. Beckford, for example, claims that there is a direct link between multi-racialism and pluralism in plantation societies because the plantation brought together people of different races and cultural backgrounds to carry out the task of production. See George Beckford, Underdevelopment in Plantation Economies of the Third World: Persistent Poverty (London: Oxford University Press, 1972.) p. 56, also J.S. Furnival, Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India (London: 1948.) p. 304. (see chapter iii for a discussion of the applicability of this theory to Guiana's development.
15. This group comprised of the Governor, the Colonial Secretary, the Attorney General, the Chief of Police and other lower ranking functionaries.
16. The plantations in Guiana were owned by a small group of Companies, among the largest were Bookers and Sanbach Parker Co. Ltd. Many plantation owners were also involved in the shipping of their produce to European markets.
17. E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class. (London: Penguin Books, 1991.) p. 8.
18. G.E.M. De Ste. Croix, The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World: From the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd., 1981.) p. 43.
19. Ibid., pp. 43-44.
20. Thompson, pp. 8-9.
21. See for example Frantz Fanon, Towards the African Revolution. (New York: 1967.) and Rodney, A History of... p. 179.
22. Rodney, " *Subject Race and Class Contradictions in Guianese History.*" University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, May 1979., also, by the same author, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1989.)
23. F.H. Cardoso, and E. Faletto, Dependency and Development in Latin America. (Berkeley: University of California Press., 1979.)
24. Amilcar Cabral, Revolution in Guinea: An African People's Struggle. (London: Whitstable Litho Ltd., 1974), also Chidi Amuta, " *Fanon, Cabral and Ngugi on National Liberation,*" in B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin (eds.) The Post Colonial Studies Reader. (London and New York: Routledge, 1995.) pp. 158-163.

25. The cultural diversity was used by the planters in the stereotyping of the different groups of workers on the plantation. For a discussion of the implications of this feature, see chapter iv, also H.V. Bronkurst, The Colony of British Guiana and its Labouring Population. (London: 1883.) p. 212, also Rodney, A History... pp. 179-181.

26. Rodney, A History of.. p. 179.

27. This is a term used by the workers and plantation management when referring to the cultivated areas located several miles from the public road and factory compound.

28. Names given to African and East Indian residential areas on the plantations.

29. This was largely due to the outward orientation of the European economic activities in the colonies. The plantations were financed from Europe and the profits shipped out of the colonies instead of being reinvested in the society in the form of improved social services or in promoting a more diversified economy. This aspect of the mother country/colony relationship is examined in greater detail in chapter iii.

30. See Diana Hunt, Economic Theories of Development: An Analysis of Competing Paradigms. (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989.) p. 198.

31. Ronaldo Munck, The New International Labour Studies An Introduction. (London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd. 1988.); R. Cohen, Labour and Politics in Nigeria. (London: Heinemann, 1974; J. Payne, Labor and Politics in Peru: The System of Political Bargaining. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965.)

32. Ibid., p. 125.

33. Ibid.

CHAPTER II

Worker Organisation, Trade Unionism and 'Dependent' Development

Live on, live on through
Time,
And in time.
African
Ancestor and descendants:
Create!
Create!
Onward and forever,
For those who will come after.

Morgan Daiphinis, For Those Who Will Come After. (Collected Poems 1968-1985) London: Karia Press 1985.

Labour organisation in Guiana during the 1920s extended beyond the narrow realm of 'industrial relations' where workers' organisation was confined to the factories and other points of production under a system of institutionalised collective bargaining. This was because 'labour' was not confined to the sugar estates but it also encompassed small scale farming and cottage industries within the city and village communities. The chapter begins by examining this form of workers' development in Guiana in relation to that of other ex-colonial states. This analysis also highlights the organisational forms which gave rise to the Ruimveldt Incident.

The nature of labour relations and production in the colony was influenced by overseas investors within the plantation system, and Guyana's development was linked to that of Britain and the British Empire. Therefore, the second section of the chapter locates Guiana's development within the global political economy. In this process, some features of 'dependency' and 'world systems' perspective are employed.

The Development of Trade Unionism in Guiana: Theoretical Approaches

In an analysis of the development of trade unionism in Guiana, care must be taken to avoid subsuming these developments in the wider literature on labour studies of 'Latin America' or the 'Third World.' While it should be recognised that there are certain common themes in trade union development in countries of these regions, each possess their distinctive traditions reflecting the different forms of labour historically, and the uneven and varied experiences, modes and levels of working class formation, resistance and organisation. [1] (p.85 →)

For a significant part of the history of Guiana the working people laboured under the unfree work regimes of 'enslavement' and 'indentureship.' Under these systems and for a considerable period after their legal termination, [2] working people were denied the opportunity of organising for the purpose of establishing labour unions.

These limitations however, did not prevent workers of various categories from seeking to influence the nature of labour relations in their interests. For example after enslavement was legally terminated in 1838, Africans immediately embarked upon a struggle at the point of production over wages and working conditions. The typical organisation of the workers was the *gang* or *jobbing gang*. [3]

During the 'post-emancipation' era, a number of developments contributed to more complex labour relations in Guiana. The expansion in world trade prompted by European and North American industrialization during the latter part of the nineteenth century, contributed to the incorporation of colonial economies

into the global economic system. In response to this overseas demand, planters imported a vast number of immigrant workers for the sugar plantations. These developments contributed to an increase in the ranks of the working people and also to the complexity of the ethnic composition of the Guianese population. Under these conditions, the first sustained attempt to establish a trade union in Guiana was made in 1919. [4]

Although several models have been used to explain the phenomenon of trade unionism in Guiana and by extension, other areas of the so called 'Third World,' the contribution of writers such as Southall, Payne, Munck, Cohen and Gutkind, holds some relevance to Guiana. This is due to the emphasis these writers placed on the central role of the 'working class' in the struggle for improved working conditions and the transformation of their society.

These writers advocate a shift from the traditional concerns of 'labour studies' (industrial relations, union structures, wage rates, ~~employment~~ levels and labour mobility) towards emphasis upon broader processes such as proletarianisation, the political character of worker struggles, the role of the urban poor, labour migration and " critically, the subordination of women as producers and 'reproducers' in peripheral societies. " [5]

The popularity of this 'new international labour studies' can be seen in the renewed attention given to trade unions in the 'Third World' by writers such as Peter Waterman, who emphasised that unions are fundamental organisations of the working class, " ones which workers 'cannot do without' if they are to resist exploitation by capital and 'thereby impose themselves upon

society.' " [6] The argument is also made for the need to write the working class back into the history of third world transformation " from whence it has been too dismissively banished `in favour of preoccupations with landlord, peasant, bourgeoisie, and the state. " [7] The dissertation contributes to this objective through the central role given to the activities of the Guianese working people.

Commenting upon the strategic importance of workers in the ex-colonies of Europe, Munck, acknowledging the diversity of developing countries, argues that: " Third World unions have... acquired strong bargaining positions in those areas essential to export- oriented economies-docks, railways and the mining and plantation enclaves. " [8]

In Guiana during the 1920s the dock workers demonstrated their consciousness of their strategic importance to the economic activities of the country when they emerged as the most vibrant and organised group. Popular strikes and `walk-out' by workers in this sector had the potential to disrupt the loading and shipment of sugar and its by-products to European markets.

Supporting the dock workers, were the estate and factory workers on several plantations throughout the country. The nature of factory work (and resident within the confines of the plantations) created the conditions for workers to cut across social, political or ethnic barriers and organised collectively in defence of their interests. From this group consciousness and the formation of trade unions, emerged the possibility of *class* action. [9] It will be demonstrated that community organisation has been the dominant force in cross-ethnic nationalist

alliances. Essentially, the nationalist approach, served to give a great degree of cohesion to the labour movement in Guiana.

It should be noted that the early unions exhibited marked continuity with the 'pre-union' workers' organisations. The church, the early forms of organisation found in the trades-bakers, shoemakers, printers and tailors-constituted a key organisation centre for the unions. [10]

The development of trade unions in Guiana must be located within the history of anti-colonial resistance, the resistance to forced labour and taxation and the refusal to enter the capitalist economy on the terms offered. This resistance was sustained through overt and covert acts against inhuman working conditions and low wages on the docks and plantations.

" Resistance ranging from the quiet avoidance of particularly bad work places to deliberate sabotage and poor work performance to pilfering and open revolt. " [11]

Another important characteristic of the working people's reaction was the emergence (among the various sections of the migrant work force) of nativistic and syncretistic religious movements with obvious anti-capitalist and anti-colonial overtones, movements in search for renewed cultural identity and the restoration, under new circumstances, of the moral economy characteristic of their lives in another place and at another time. [12] In the context of Guiana and the Caribbean, Moore [13] and Rodney, [14] defined this development as the process of *creolization*. [15]

von Onselen made the observation that in a labour coercive economy, worker ideologies and organisations should be viewed

essentially as the high water marks of protest. [16] While ideological expressions should not be the dominant factor in the analysis of workers' response, they should however, be seen as reinforcing the

...silent and often unorganised responses, ...which occurred on a day to day basis...and forward the woof and warp of worker consciousness. Likewise it was the unarticulated, unorganised protest and resistance which the employers and the state found most difficult to detect or suppress. [17]

The unions which emerged in Guiana formed an alignment with the popular movement shaped by the middle class but driven by artisans, cottage labourers, casual workers, dock workers, factory and field workers and female domestic workers. The movement embraced 'human rights' and political issues. This was necessary in an environment where fundamental human rights such as freedom of movement and the ability to choose one's employer, were denied by the state. Therefore the earliest organisations advocated and defended two fundamental human rights; the right to a decent living (an economic right) and the right to assemble, associate, speak out and strike in order to acquire that decent living (political rights). [18]

In addition, factors such as the nature of the society and the production regime are significant in determining the pattern of workers response to working conditions and exploitation in general. In his analysis of the strike by textile workers in Gaston County; Southern USA, in 1929, Pope's observation on the organisation within the 'Mill Village,' has much relevance to the plantation regime in Guiana during the 1920s:

... it was capitalism at its peak of control over culture: capitalism extended through paternalism. The capitalist did not merely provide capital he also established the facilities and set the norms for politics, morals, religion amusement and all other major spheres of culture. [19]

With these features in place the activities of the workers were centred around the *Mill Villages*. These highly paternalistic settlements were adopted from New Lanark and other English model mill villages. Because of the relative isolation of these villages they emerged as self contained units. The mill builder provided virtually all facilities for the penniless workers he had imported and assumed absolute control of their use. " By this and similar devices, the mill village system and its attendant features remained intact after many of its original purposes had been realised and transmuted." [20]

The nature of capitalist exploitation of labour and physical resources in British Guiana during the 1920s displayed striking parallels with the situation in Gastonia in 1929. Although the East Indian estate workers were legally free of their contractual obligations by 1924, they continued to live and work under an estate regime which did not change in any significant way from the periods of enslavement and indentureship. The squalid '*Nigger Yard*' and '*Bound Yard*' [21] still housed the estate workers; the planters encouraged conflicts between the racial groups and even among members of different gangs [22] in order to prevent the workers from uniting in a common approach to labour issues- this strategy was widely used under the unfree labour regimes-; the movement of estate workers was restricted and even the services of the '*Immigration Agent General*'-

'Crosby;' [23] was retained and proved to be effective in the mediation of disputes among estate workers and the planters.

The dissertation will demonstrate that although factors such as the militancy of the trade union, low wages, deplorable working conditions, unresolved labour disputes and chronic unemployment triggered the incident in Georgetown and Ruimveldt in 1924, these are just some of the features of a deeper, more profound, social and political malady. Workers from different social and cultural background came into close proximity on the plantations, on the docks and in the homes of the white ruling class. At the work place they were exposed to the same form of exploitation. Over the years they were able to develop strong bonds which included aspects of their culture. [24] By 1924, their consciousness was such that consideration of race, religion and place of work were relegated into a secondary position to the more urgent agenda of the struggle against capitalist exploitation.

Beginning in the mid 1920s, a number of developments in Guiana and the international community contributed to a change in the nature of trade unionism. Among these factors were an increase in the number of time-expired [25] East Indian indentured labourers who made the decision to settle in Guiana instead of returning to India; the active participation of members of this group in local government activities-chiefly in the municipalities of Georgetown and New Amsterdam-and even within the legislature. Such participation was made possible through the ability of a significant number of the working people to satisfy the financial and other requirements for the

franchise.

These developments were followed by a demand for greater representation in the legislature. The BGLU, the only recognised union during the period, took the opportunity to provide leadership for a wider section of the workers. In addition, the agenda of the union was widened to address constitutional issues and matters relating to the development of economies outside of sugar. A series of popular protests rejecting the dominance of the planters and foreign entrepreneurs and a call for the construction of a viable political alternative which reflected the views and interests of the majority, constituted a major part of the union's strategy. [26] In this respect organised labour emerged as an important agency advocating wider political, social and economic issues which affected the entire working class.

This was done in several ways. First, labour militancy served, often in combination with other forms of popular and grassroots mobilization, (village councils, street corner meetings, church and religious gatherings) to explore and extend the limits of popular protests to express dissatisfaction with specific conditions existing under the authoritarian situation: low wage levels, adverse living conditions and the lack of civil rights, such as the right to strike and the right to picket. [27] In this way labour militancy contributed to the politicization of the Guianese public.

Secondly, labour militancy also played an important role in placing pressure upon the authorities in favour of a transition agenda and a political pact. This is in view of the fact that organised labour contributed to the establishment of

a credible political alternative by supporting and participating in opposition political movement (such as the support given by the BGLU to the 'Popular Party' in 1926 and the earlier 'People's Political Association') which could rely on widespread popular support. [28]

Throughout the country, the political activities of the unions were closely monitored by Colonial Officials and the Colonial Office. The authorities were aware of the potential of the trade union to aid the ascendancy of non-white leaders to political office in the country—a possibility which was unsatisfactory to the British authorities during the 1920s. [29] The Secretary of State capitalised upon the relationship between Guianese labour leaders and members of the British TUC [30] in an attempt to influence the direction of trade unionism through the implementation of 'good behaviour' unionism from the mother country.

Some understanding can be gained from the writings of the *Radicals* [31] in relation to the extent to which the metropolitan authorities attempted to replicate features present in British industrial relations to the colonial scene. According to this School, leaders of organised labour were only recognised by the government so long as the recognition served the government's purpose. The trade union in effect became a part of the social machinery of the state but only in a subordinate capacity— the object was to separate leaders from working people. [32]

Writers such as Price and Hyman focus on the state recognition of trade union leaders enabled employers to use union

leaders to moderate the demands of their members and enforce unpopular settlements on the rank and file. In this way labour leaders became part of the machinery designed to subordinate organised labour. [33] It was an attempt to force union leaders to exchanged traditional trade union practices-and militancy- for collective bargaining rights.

An interesting parallel can be made with Guiana during the 1920s in the way employers carefully selected the labour leaders they were willing to negotiate with. Often, those selected had the greatest influence over the largest section of the working people. One such leader was Critchlow. On several occasions, during the period of the Ruimveldt Workers' Incident he was summoned to private meetings with the employers and government Officials. On some of these occasions, Critchlow was forced into deals which were largely unsatisfactory to the majority of the workers. [34]

Under trade union leadership the workers were able to wage an effective struggled against the influence of the state. The militant dock and estate workers were supported by 'marginal' groups such as female domestic workers demanding shorter working hours and wage increase; market vendors who were victims of government's monopoly on trade; small traders who suffered from an increase in tax on the huckstering trade; [35] and the unemployed who were seeking employment. Members of these groups comprised a significant proportion of the non-white majority in the community who were victimised by the planting oligarchy and their allies.

In the society, therefore, popular mobilisation was extended

from apparently narrow economic concerns to embrace the general interests of the labouring poor. These general struggles by their nature did not focus on individual employers but the state as employer and government which implemented anti-popular measures. In these struggles community organisations were important in mobilising the working people, sometimes alongside and sometimes replacing the trade unions. [36]

Aided by trade union organisations, workers were able to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with colonial rule and exploitation at the work place through a series of well planned and carefully executed protests (of which the Ruimveldt Incident is one of the most significant) during the 1920s and early 30s. These protests represent overt forms of resistance which were made possible through the co-ordination of activities conducted by the working people at the hidden or 'informal' levels of resistance. Part of the significance of this Incident can be found in the way it aided the development of larger and better organised trade unions in Guiana and, in the process, created the foundation for future political development through the emergence of leaders who enjoyed popular support from a wide section of the working people.

The Ruimveldt Workers' Incident

This dissertation, seeks to establish the importance of the 1924 Ruimveldt Incident as a significant moment of overt resistance in the political, social and economic struggle of the Guianese working people. The Incident is located within the progressive tradition of the Guianese working people in an era which predates the arrival of the Europeans. [37] In addition,

the analysis effectively establishes the link between the 1924 Incident and other moments of overt working people's resistance in Guiana and the wider Caribbean region. Prominent among these historically significant incidents are the workers' incident of 1905 [38] and the workers' revolt throughout the Caribbean in the 1930s. [39]

Of equal significance within this tradition of resistance also, are instances of subtle (covert) acts of defiance against the plantation activities. In every labour regime introduced in Guiana, working people have resorted to sabotage, malingering, arson (the burning of young cane plants) and other stratagems in an attempt to influence the condition under which they worked and to inflict as much damage as possible on their employers' property.

Although these activities are seemingly disorganised, less co-ordinated and different from trade union branch meetings or strikes, such acts of resistance are resorted to when open (overt) union activities are suppressed by the employers or the government. Cohen suggests that " overt forms of resistance represent a readily observable consciousness, whereas hidden (or informal) patterns of resistance represent 'a latent and subterranean reservoir of consciousness.' " [40] These covert acts aided in the organisation and complemented the activities of the workers during the Incident.

The reconstruction of the events has been able to bring together the various elements which were incorporated in the action during 1924- mainly the activities of the Georgetown and East Bank workers- in a way that has not previously been

attempted. This aspect of the dissertation along with the related issues, such as Guiana's role in Britain's colonial policy, the evolution of working people's organisation and the struggle of the Guianese masses for economic prosperity and self determination, constitute a major contribution to the literature on colonial resistance.

Related Literature

Although the Incident has been quoted in numerous works, these references have been made in support of wider issues or in order to highlight specific aspects of working people's resistance. Some of the more outstanding works include Ashton Chase A History of Trade Unionism in Guyana... [41]. In this history, the significance of the incident was shown to be its impact on labour relations during a period when the BGLU- the leading union- was involved in an active campaign against unemployment and low wages. Other contributions include, Francis Drake's [Kimani Nehusi], 'The development of Political Organisation...' [42] and ^{Tony's} Martin, 'Marcus Garvey the Greater Emancipator...' [43], focus upon working people's consciousness of the source and nature of their exploitation in the organisation and execution of events. Nehusi notes the significant connections between the workers' incident of 1905 and the way the workers, in 1924, were able to align their struggle with the popular political process to bring about desirable changes from below.

Martin similarly argued that in scope and organisation, the incident represents a watershed in popular protests in Guiana. He stressed that the high level of workers' consciousness was the

logical development of a rich tradition of popular protests and agitation for constitutional reform and eventually democratic government. He locates Marcus Garvey and the UNIA in the tradition of progressive organisations in Guiana and the wider Caribbean. [44]

Furthermore, Hugh W.L. Payne and Nevin Jones examined the role of leadership in fostering co-operation among workers of different racial sections during the incident. Payne's *'Africans in the Diaspora..'* [45] highlighted the contribution of Critchlow's leadership to the workers' activities in 1905 (when he made his first appearance on the labour scene) and in 1924. For Payne, Critchlow's working class background facilitated the effective *rapport* he was able to establish with the workers. Nevin Jones, *"Some Labour Disputes in 20th Century British Guiana..."* [46] attempted a comparative analysis of the extent to which workers of different racial sections, perceived themselves as members of a single 'class,' during the workers' incidents in 1905 and 1924.

Among the scholarly writings on the Ruimveldt incident in 1924, the work of Ann Spackman, *"Official Attitude and Official Violence..."* [47] is noteworthy for the insight it provides into the nature of the society of British Guiana in 1924. However, Spackman's objective was to analyse the reaction of the officials to the workers' incident. Her task was adequately achieved in so far as she was able to establish the way prejudice and practice of the past towards people of colour, were influential in determining the way members of the white community reacted to the workers' strike and demonstration.

As a logical development of the organisational forms and the objectives set by the workers in 1924, and in keeping with the quest for desirable political and economic changes which gained momentum in the 1920s and 30s, this dissertation presents a detailed analysis of the development of workers' organisations. In this process, special emphasis is placed on the relationship between the British Government, the Colonial Office and the British TUC, on the one hand, and the labour leaders in Guiana on the other. The analysis goes beyond an examination of the official roles of the institutions and agencies, and explores the benefits the newly established unions derived from contact at semi-official levels and through direct communication with labour leaders and other politicians in Britain. [48] Of equal importance also, was the way this informal channel was exploited by the British government, through the Colonial Office, and the British TUC to monitor, and in some cases, to influence the direction of trade union development in the Caribbean region.

The insight and trends derived from this investigation, disclose much of the philosophy and guiding principles of the British government towards the development of labour unions in Guiana and the Caribbean. Also, revealed in this process, are the aspirations of the Guianese working people and the individuals who emerged to organise their struggle and articulate their grievances.

This perspective is a necessary contribution to the literature on trade unionism in Guyana, and to a lesser degree, the Caribbean. It is hoped that this will contribute to new and continued efforts in scholarly writing in this field. This is

particularly desirable in the light of the paucity of serious studies on Caribbean trade unionism.

Although there are several texts devoted to an overview of trade unionism in the English speaking Caribbean, there are relatively few general texts on the subject in specific territories of the region. In the case of Guyana, Ashton Chase's A History of Trade Unionism in Guyana... is the only work which addresses in some detail the development of workers' organisations in the country from the earliest attempts to the formation of large, legally constituted organisations. Chase explores the obstacles the workers had to overcome and the attitude of the authorities and employers to these developments.

Complementing the works mentioned above, are the writings on the regional trend of trade unionism. The contributions of Knowles, Cross and Heuman, and Henry are among the most outstanding on the development of trade unionism and the patterns of industrial relations in the English and Spanish speaking Caribbean. William Knowles' monograph, Trade Union Development and Industrial Relations in the British West Indies, [49] concentrates on the general trends in the social, economic and political background of trade union development in Guiana, Trinidad, Jamaica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Grenada.

The edited work of Cross and Heuman, Labour in the Caribbean..., [50] presents a number of articles on the development of trade unions in some territories of the English and Spanish speaking Caribbean. This work was designed to provide an insight into the various factors- including culture- which impacted upon working people's struggles for trade union

recognition within the region.

Henry's Labour Relations... [51] addresses the task of tracing and updating trade union development in the various territories of the Caribbean. In addition, some attention is given to the examination of the patterns of industrial relations which have evolved.

It should be noted however, that much of the findings from research conducted on trade unionism in the Caribbean are presented in seminar and working papers. Many of the contributors have done commendable work and their papers and articles make up a significant portion of the contemporary literature on the topic. Some of the most important are cited below.

Among the published essays, Lewis' article in Labour in the West Indies... [52] is outstanding in its representation of the workers' protests in the Caribbean during the 1930s. This article captures the regional significance of the revolts in relation to the development of trade unionism and the attitude of the metropolis to labour related issues in the region. The disclosures on the general state of poverty which prevailed among workers throughout the region, during the period, is particularly revealing and useful in drawing attention to some of the reasons for the outburst by the workers.

In relation to workers' mobilisation and trade union leadership, Brinsley Samaroo's papers have made a worthwhile contribution to the literature on trade union development in Trinidad and Tobago. His outstanding article on the "*Trinidad Workingmen's Association...*" [53] has brought to the fore the activities of an organisation in Trinidad which played a

central role in the early struggles for trade union development and political organisation. For much of its history this organisation addressed the twin issue of workers representation and political participation for the working people. In the 1920s the leaders of the Workingmen's Association worked closely with Critchlow and the British Guiana Labour Union. [54]

Any review of the literature on trade union development would be largely inadequate without some attention given to the work of Richard Hart. Like Ashton Chase of Guiana, Hart took an active role in the labour movements in the Caribbean region. His influence was felt from Jamaica in the north to Trinidad and Guyana in the south. His essays and lectures have provided useful information on many issues relating to the development of trade union development in the Caribbean. These include the lives and activities of prominent union leaders and the way the working people organise in their struggle against colonialism.

Richard Hart, lawyer, historian, trade unionist and political activist, was active in the trade union movement in Jamaica from 1938 to the mid 1950s. He was founder member of the executive of the Peoples National Party (PNP) in Jamaica. He edited the Mirror newspaper in Guiana (1964-5) and migrated to Britain in 1965 where he is still actively contributing to the discussion on trade union through lectures and papers.

His activities in the Caribbean over several decades, place him in a unique position to observe developments within the region at close hand. What is even more significant is the fact that in many instances, he was a part of the administration which influenced the nature of working people's development.

His published works include Slaves Who Abolished Slavery (2 vols. 1980, 1985) and Rise and Organise: The Birth of the Workers and National Movements in Jamaica 1936-39. (1987). [55] Among his many papers are " *Pioneers of Labour Organisation...* [56] " *Aspects of Early Caribbean Struggles: Some Lessons of our Times.*" [57] " *Origin and development of the Working Class in the English-Speaking Caribbean*" [58] and *Trade Unionism in the English-speaking Caribbean...*" [59]

Over the years, changes in the investment pattern of the sugar industry [60] and the legal termination of East Indian immigration [61] contributed to the greater *proletarianization* of the Guianese labour force. This development created the conditions for the emergence of a *working class*. This was a worldwide process and therefore calls for an analysis at this level. The following section explores the connection between a colonial division of labour and the international development of capitalism.

'Dependency' and 'World Systems'

These perspectives complement each other in the task of raising the necessary questions and providing useful insights into the nature of the existing state of development of countries in different regions of the world, and the changing relationships among states. The main features of the dependency debate are examined to establish the relevance to developments in Guiana. In this dissertation the emphasis is on the contribution of the Latin American writers such as Frank, Dos Santos and Raul Prebisch.

This is followed by an examination of the 'World Systems'

analysis to account for the role of colonial economies such as Guiana, in the global economic system and the significance of class struggle in colonial development. These features were not adequately addressed by the dependency writers.

The chapter concludes with an examination of the relevance of 'dependency' and 'world systems' theoretical approaches in providing explanations for the developments examined in the dissertation. In addition, some of the main contributions of the thesis to this and related literature in the context of Guiana and the Caribbean are presented.

Dependency: The Nature of Development in Guiana

During the colonial period, almost every aspect of life in Guiana was influenced by the mother country through its official representatives and the presence of the white minority in the society. The dominant white plantocracy was allowed to exercise state power, subject only to the authority of the Crown, to perpetuate their own hegemony by seeking to deny the non-white subordinate categories political rights and privileges as equal colonial subjects. [62] The interests of the working people were only given attention after direct representation to the metropolitan authorities through the Colonial Office.

Issues relating to assistance for peasant cultivation or the development of economies outside of the realm of sugar were given little attention because of the absence of specific direction from the Colonial Office or the reluctance of the colonial authorities to implement policies set out by that Office. Although the Colonial Office outlined a policy on hinterland development, [63] projects designed to promote development in

this area were never successfully launched. In this aspect of colonial administration, the influence of the Governor and the guidelines for developmental initiatives which were laid down by the Colonial Office, were crucial factors.

For example, in 1908 Colonel John Waldo Link, on behalf of the Colonial Rail and Tramway Syndicate, submitted a proposal to construct a railway from Georgetown to the Brazilian border. [64] This proposal, although it conformed to government's stated programme on the 'opening up of the interior', was rejected by Governor Hodgson and, upon his recommendation, by the Secretary of State.

Hodgson's principal objections to the proposals were based on what he regarded as the uncertainty of a connection with, and through traffic from Brazil; the extent of the land grants; and the inability of the colony to meet the required guarantee. [65]

A further proposal was put forward to the government in 1913. [66] This project aimed at creating access to the large stands of balata trees and the cattle area of the Rupununi Savannah. [67] Again, this proposal failed to develop into a successful economic venture because of the government's failure to meet all the requirements relating to land grants and provide the necessary support services.

When Sir Walter Egerton took office as Governor of Guiana, he brought to this position a deep personal commitment to the improvement of the welfare of the Guianese masses. He was surprised at the deplorable state of the working people in a colony gifted with mineral resources and large stretches of fertile land. [68]

Governor Egerton gave his support to the proposals for the hinterland railway construction. His vision was based upon using the rail link as a prerequisite step towards the development of several hinterland communities through the exploitation of agricultural, mineral and forest resources of the *Potaro*, *Conawarook* and *Rupununi* districts. The Governor approached the Imperial Treasury for a sum of £1.25 million to aid in the financing of the venture.

The Colonial Office refused to support the venture on the condition that it was not viable. This act of refusal brought into sharp focus the Imperial government's attitude to colonial development and the dilemma in which that policy placed the colony of British Guiana.

Although the Secretary of State conceded that the interior had considerable potential for development, he did not feel that Governor Egerton's scheme was based on the kind of economic principles which would justify his approaching the Imperial Parliament. [69] The observation was made that any scheme which hoped to obtain the support of the British Parliament would have to show " a satisfactory prospect of expenditure incurred being recouped within a reasonable period..." [70] Such was not the case with the proposed scheme. The social and economic benefits to the Guianese working people took second place to British economic interests.

Deprived of support, the resources of the hinterland remained largely inaccessible or underdeveloped and the working people were deprived of a viable alternative to the sugar industry which, because of its own problems and limitations, has

demonstrated over the years that it was incapable of effectively absorbing the available coastal labour force.

The ruling white minority employed the apparatus of the colonial state in a systematically repressive manner to subjugate the non-white majority. For example the 'Crown Lands Regulations' were employed to confine the working people to the plantation belt and so limit their economic opportunities outside of the sugar industry. [71] The implementation of a land policy which placed an artificially high price on crown lands and prohibiting its purchase in parcels of less than 100 acres, was deliberately designed to prevent the growth of a peasantry independent of the sugar estates. [72]

The nature of this relationship between the 'developed' countries of Europe and colonial states such as Guiana resulted in the colonial economies developing in a 'special' way which is unlike the path of development taken by the now 'developed' countries. Dependency theories have been able to provide a useful model of analysis which provides explanations for the pattern of development in the ex-colonies of Europe. The explanations provided by the dependency perspective constitute an important point of departure in analysing the 'special' pattern of development in the so called 'Third World' or countries of the 'periphery.'

The *Dependency Perspective* has been influenced by the debate on 'development and underdevelopment' and also 'Theories of Imperialism' from Europe and the 'Developing World.' For this reason, the next section briefly examines some aspects of the debate on 'development and underdevelopment' and the

contributions to the theories of Imperialism. This is followed by an examination of the main features of Dependency theory.

Classification of Development and Underdevelopment

A significant number of the theories [73] which emerged during the 1940s and 50s, simplified the critique of colonialism by investigating it from a restricted perspective and concentrated on evaluating the problems or gains of colonial liberation largely from features of the 'socialist' revolution. Theories of this period took proletarian revolution as a direct precondition for the liberation of the colonies and regarded their future post-colonial development as the natural and necessary repetition (that is imitation) of the pattern of development of the first socialist countries in all details. [74] The prevalence of these theories resulted in a situation in which the analysis of development issues lagged behind the changes taking place in the so called 'developing' countries.

For example, in the post 1945 period, there emerged significant changes in the foreign policies of leading capitalist countries. Changing patterns in world production and trade, were seen in the dominance of the multinational corporations. In addition, there was the urgent demand for practical solutions to a number of social and economic issues which were a natural development of the changing global order. These issues include the working out of the aid policy of international organisations; the role of the IMF in the economic readjustment of developing countries; economic advice to be given to the newly independent states; the re-examination of the terms of international trade and credit conditions in the light of the problems of the

developing countries; and the emergence of the Newly Industrialised Countries (NICs). Such developments and others cast doubts on the explanatory power of early dependency theory and signalled the need for a theory which could accommodate and explain such developments in their historical setting.

Theorists often determine the quality of life of a population and the rate of economic growth through the use of statistical indices such as per capita income and balance of trade figures. While these are useful in gauging the prevailing levels of operation of the productive forces, [75] they do not address the *externalities* of economic growth. [76] These include aspects such as the vulnerability of the economy, marginalisation of certain sectors and the impact of uneven growth on the economy as a whole. These features are seen by writers such as Evans, Cardoso and Amin as the qualitative aspects of development. [77]

A more sophisticated dependency perspective makes a significant contribution in this area by showing that, because of the dependent conditions, developing countries are experiencing a qualitatively different form of development to that which took place in the developed countries. [78] In this form of development, growth does not always lead to a wider distribution of income and political participation. Two characteristics of this form of development are: firstly, the source and dynamics of the pattern of development lie outside the economy, internal links are destroyed and weakened and linkages with external sectors are established instead; secondly, the economy is particularly responsive to external rather than internal changes. [79]

In this way, the economies of developing countries are very vulnerable if there is a disruption of necessary supplies and also, in the sense that any economic downturn in the centre or metropolis will have greater adverse effects in these economies. [80] Another feature of qualitative development is the inequalities of the local economy to the foreign sector. This is largely due to the fact that most of the inputs of capital and technology are concentrated in a specific sector of the economy—in the case of Guiana during the 1920s, sugar cultivation—at the expense of others. The result is that growth usually follows a sectoral pattern. This situation is made even worse for the developing country since gains generated in this sector do not have the desired 'spread effect' whereby the benefits of such gains can be transferred to other sectors. [81]

Theories of Imperialism

In a general sense, theories of imperialism attempted to account for the continued growth of capitalism by focusing on the way the acquisition of colonies had enabled European powers to export capital and thereby postpone crisis at home. [82] The debate on the nature of imperialism is not clearcut since each generation of writers throughout the world presents new insight in relation to the topic. [83] For example, Lenin's treatment of imperialism does not conform in every detail to the more general explanation. Lenin's view was based on his belief that with the declining rate of profit in the metropolis, the opening up of colonies would create more profitable investment opportunities abroad. For him, imperialism was characterised by a net outflow of capital to the colonies. [84]

A distinctive feature of Lenin's concept is that he did not regard imperialism as an expression of the relationship between two states, but rather, as a stage in the development of capitalism. [85] This stage of capitalist development was seen to have the following characteristics:

(1) the dominance of monopolies; (2) the dominance of finance capital; (3) the export of capital [rather than the export of commodity]; (4) the formation of internal monopolies; (5) the partition of the world between the various imperialist powers. [86]

These early theories of imperialism were limited in a number of significant ways in reflecting contemporary capitalist development and the state of underdevelopment of the developing countries. Features such as the role of the multinational company as the dominant organisational form of big capital [87] and even the timing of the scramble for colonies during the early period of the century, cannot be adequately accounted for in these theories.

In addition, many of the Western theories of imperialism confine their analysis to the impact of imperialism on the developed countries. For example the mechanisms of control and the changing pattern of relationships between imperial rulers and indigenous collaborating groups were not given adequate attention. The wider implications of this process in relation to the development of the developing countries are ignored or inadequately treated. [88] A significant omission is an analysis of the social consequences of imperialism, both for the colonisers and the colonised. In addition, the role of social classes in the struggle for liberation and decolonisation is

often omitted. These and other related features constitute some of the main issues addressed in this dissertation.

Theories of Imperialism from Developing Countries

In the light of the observations made above, writers from developing countries felt the need for a theory of imperialism which reflected the social, economic, cultural and political features which developed in the regions of the developing world as a result of European activities. In this examination, it is necessary to establish the historical links of the people of these regions. For example, it is of great significance to recognise that culturally and intellectually, Africa forms a continuum with the West Indies and black America in one direction and the wider Islamic world in the other. [89] This is because of the common history of exploitation and also, the recognition that the struggle against neo-colonialism and continued exploitation require co-operation and the consolidation of the resources of these areas.

Among the most prominent writers in this tradition are: Marcus Garvey, Edward Blyden, Aime Cesaire, Frantz Fanon, Jamal al-din al-Afghani and Sultan Galiyev, Walter Rodney, C.Y. Thomas, Amilcar Cabral, Samir Amin, Emile Faure, Tovalou Houenou [90] and Edward Said. These writers, writing at different historical periods, adopt a common approach in the important task of explaining underdevelopment and the necessity to 'end' colonialism. Among the questions addressed are: What is a theory of imperialism meant to be? What should it seek to explain? On these issues, there is clear consensus that a theory of imperialism should seek to explain, first: How did there come

into being the particular kinds of relationship of domination and subjection between the industrially and technologically advanced 'Western' and the industrially and technologically 'retarded' 'non-Western,' societies. [91] Secondly, what have been the main effects of Western imperialism, and the colonial and semi-colonial Systems to which it gave rise, on the societies of the colonisers and the colonised, the dominant and the subjected people, and on the overall world situation ? Thirdly, how can this entire system of relationships, and the attitudes arising therefrom be abolished or transformed ? [92]

In this dissertation, the contribution of Walter Rodney to the imperialist literature, is of particular relevance. This is because of the strong emphasis he placed on the historical antecedence of imperialism and the effects on the colonies and the European metropolis. In How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, [93] Rodney provides a detailed historical analysis of how European activities systematically 'underdeveloped' African states. He demonstrated that during the early years of contact between Europe and Africa, the level of economic development of the two regions could have been favourably compared. However, over the decades of European presence, the economies of several European states, showed marked signs of growth while there was economic stagnation and even decline in numerous African communities. This state of affairs was brought on by the disruptive effects which European activities, such as enslavement, had on the stability and progress within the African societies. In addition, the introduction of European textiles and other goods, stifled the natural growth of similar indigenous

industries. The fact that gains derived from these activities were shipped to and reinvested in Europe also influenced economic development in both areas.

Rodney's work can be numbered among those writings on imperialism which, from about the late 1950s, began to address popularly and openly the effects of imperialism on overseas economies in an attempt to explain the roots of 'backwardness' or 'underdevelopment.' Out of this exercise came a dependency theory strongly influenced by the way the mode of production and the relationship among states influenced the nature of development experienced by countries in different parts of the world.

The Main Features of Dependency Theory

Three distinct traditions can be traced in the dependency debate: (1) the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) Structuralist perspective, associated with Raul Prebisch, Sunkel, Furtado and Pinto; (2) the Marxist perspective, developed by Ruy Marini, dos Santos and A.G. Frank, [94] (3) and a third perspective which straddles both of the above. This last perspective which is a part of the most recent trends in this debate, is closely associated with F.H. Cardoso, Octavio Ianni and Florestan Fernandes. [95]

ECLA emerged in 1948 [96] as a new incentive out of the search by Latin American countries to break out of the old 'endogenous paradigms' which had bogged down sociological theories. [97] The new position focused on the fact that Latin America had developed as an integral part of the world economy. " The theorists of ECLA asserted that there was an immediate and

direct link between changes in the industrialised countries of the centre and the underdeveloped countries of the periphery. "[98]

This organisation which had its greatest impact between the period 1949 to the mid 1960s, [99] was directed by Raul Prebisch, the prominent Argentine economist, for a considerable period. In addition to its political impact, ECLA played an important role in shaping opinion in Latin America. According to Andrade, " It was distinctively Latin American in character, and its language was one of rational action. Its highest hopes- those of a Third World Humanism- were to 'free man from want'. [100] The major strategy was to diversify the export base of the Latin American countries and accelerate industrialisation through import substitution.

It should be noted however, that the dependency perspective did not originate with ECLA. In a significant way this perspective can be viewed as a restatement of ideas that had been influential in the region, as I will indicate below.

Dependency presupposes some form of 'conditioning situation' in which the possibilities for economic progress in a nation are determined and largely limited by conditions imposed from the outside. This implies a high measure of sensitivity to external forces: dependent economies are unable to avoid being influenced by events elsewhere. [101] Beyond this, the dependency perspective attempts to clarify the process of integration of the periphery into the international capitalist system and the developmental implications thereof. [102] Dos Santos provides the following definition:

By dependence we mean a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected. The relation of interdependence between two or more economies, and between these and world trade, assumes the form of dependence when some countries (the dominant ones) can do this only as a reflection of that expansion, which can have either a positive or negative effect on their immediate development. [103]

Dos Santos' definition highlights the interdependent nature of various economies of the world. In addition, dependency is a matter of degree rather than of kind. On the global scene, no economy is completely independent of others or, for that matter, completely dependent. The following observation by Fernando Henrique Cardoso draws attention to the historical links of the dependency perspective:

The analysis of dependency situations in Latin America done in the second half of the sixties did not represent new methodological propositions. What happened was that a current which was already old in Latin American thought managed to make itself heard in the discussions that were taking place in institutions normally closed to it: ECLA, the universities, some government planning agencies, and ... the North American academic community. As for the renovating influence of the North American Neo-Marxist current, if it was real (principally the contribution of Baran), it was certainly not greater than that of Marx himself, and it did not reveal anything not already present in the perspective of critical Latin American thought before 1960... A study of the history of ideas in the twentieth century would show that each generation of critical intellectuals seeks to revive Marxism with a new breath of life... Studies of dependency, then, constitute part of this constantly renewed effort to reestablish a tradition of analysis of economic structures and structures of domination; one that would not suffocate the historical process by removing from it the movement which results from the permanent struggle among groups and classes... [104]

It is in this tradition of constantly reviewing the nature of production and exchange and the changing relations between the 'developed' and 'developing' world brought about

through the historical process, that this dissertation investigates the colonial relationship between Guiana and Great Britain. The Ruimveldt Incident reflects this process by highlighting the struggle of the working people against capitalist exploitation and colonial domination through grass-roots organisation and public demonstration.

The work of Frank and Cardoso for example, can be seen as improving and refining a perspective which has a long and intellectually significant tradition in Latin American writing [105] A number of dependency writers- within and outside of Latin America- have suggested links between their work and that of numerous Latin American Marxists, neo-Marxists and other radical 'writers who preceded them in writing critically' about Latin America. [106]

Prominent among these writers are the historian Sergio Bagu and the Peruvian Marxist Jose Carlos Mariategui. In his studies, Bagu stressed the interrelation of domestic development in Latin America and developments in the metropolitan countries. [107] This broad structural analysis approach in explaining underdevelopment was also adopted by Latin American writers such as Ianni, Fernandes and Dos Santos.

The contribution of Frank, can be seen in the light of his attempt to deal with some of the problems experienced by ECLA. In the initial period of its operation, ECLA economists' vision of dependency was as a purely economic relationship between two national economies (or between two aggregated groups of national economies), in which the economic development of the dependent nations was conditioned by the economic development of the

metropolitan nations. [108]

This approach resulted in a situation where ECLA encountered serious problems with several of the big land-owners of many Latin American countries. An important reason for this conflict, was the fact that ECLA ignored the specific class interests and the relationships between classes which led to the continual reproduction of the structure of dependency. [109]

Frank used the statement: *'a chain of exploitative relations: extraction and transmission of surplus through a series of metropolis-satellite links.* [110] On the global scale, the relationship between the industrialised West and the developing countries can be seen as relations between metropolis and satellite. In this relationship, the metropolitan states appropriate the surplus from the satellite, their towns removing the surplus from their hinterland, their landlord from the peasants, their merchants from shopkeepers, and finally, shopkeepers from the customers. [111] Frank located 'exploitation' in the sphere of exchange rather than production.

In a critique of Frank's position, Laclau [112] adopted a more orthodox Marxist position, and observed that 'mode of production' is not geared to the presence or absence of exchange relations. Rather, it is the relations of *production* that are the defining characteristic of any particular mode of production, where the latter refers to " 'an integrated complex of social productive forces and relations linked to a determinate type of ownership of the means of production.'" [113] Under capitalism, ownership of the means of production is severed from ownership of labour power. This factor permits the emergence of wage labour

that is, of a labour force subject to economic compulsion. Exchange relations exchange under capitalism, but they are not a characteristic that is particular to this mode. [114]

Brenner's [115] observation that Frank failed to apply any class analysis to the periphery, complements Laclau's emphasis on the 'complex social productive forces and relations' linked to the type and means of production. [116] Brenner argues that the pre-capitalist production relations which combine use of cheap labour with a low organic composition of capital have inevitably curtailed the inducement to invest in the periphery, for the demand for both mass consumption goods and capital goods is severely restrained in these economies, while the exploiting class meet their luxury consumption requirements through imports. [117]

The dissertation evaluates the way the planters in Guiana were able to capitalise upon the 'pre-capitalist' structures in the society to promote their economic interests. For example employers were able to use patronage and support for small businesses and peasant agriculture in an attempt to keep the working people divided and also to regulate the rate of growth of economies outside the sugar industry. It is instructive to note that the peasant sector was often expected to lend a hand in the struggle for the survival of the sugar industry. The rent and leases peasant cultivators paid for their provision grounds, were often increased without warning, depending upon the state of the sugar industry. [118] In addition produce from small farms and earnings from retail trade were expected to subsidise workers earnings from the sugar industry.

Like Frank, Brenner is committed to a change in the relationship between the industrialised countries and those of the periphery. However, he does not feel that a detachment of the periphery from the world economy is the way to achieve this objective. He sees withdrawal as having negative consequences for the development of the productivity of labour, which is the essence of economic development. The only viable route to economic progress in the periphery, given the existing level of development of the productive forces at the centre, is through international co-operation between working class socialist movements at the centre and the periphery. [119]

Among the Latin American writers on dependency, the work of Frank and Cardoso stand out as significant contributions to the dependency debate. Cardoso's writings have been able to provide answers and meaningful clarification to several issues raised in the perspective. For example *'Dependency y Desarrollo en America Latina'* (*Dependency and Development in Latin America*) this work, which was published in collaboration with Enzo Faletto, is widely regarded as the *locus classicus* of dependency writings. [120]

In the preface to the English edition, Cardoso and Faletto state emphatically and repeatedly that their approach is not to present a 'theory of dependency' but 'rather' to stress diversity, specificity and 'concrete situations' as ways to understand and explain events in Latin America. [121] It is in this context that the dependency perspective is applied in this dissertation in order to clarify issues relating to Guiana's development during the 1920s and 30s.

Dependency: A Critique

One of the main characteristics of dependency writing has been the variety of attempts to formulate characterisations, models and analyses of underdevelopment or dependency in general. [122] These attempts resulted in theoretical repetition and even stagnation in the dependency debate.

Part of the explanation for this situation can be found in the difficulty in providing a precise definition for much of the key concepts used in the dependency debate. For example 'development', 'underdevelopment', 'centre', 'periphery' and 'dependence.' Significant clarification will be required to highlight the fact that the USA and Portugal, for example, are 'developed' in different ways. Similarly, the concept 'underdeveloped' must be quite flexible to be used to classify Brazil and Haiti with equal effectiveness. The 'centre/periphery' metaphor is often used in a broad context involving the 'developed' and 'developing' countries. It is seldom replaced by a concrete typology of centres and peripheries. [123]

Although the dependency literature distinguishes between different historical periods—the mercantilistic colonial period (1500–1750), the period of 'outward growth' (1750–1914), the period of the crisis of the 'liberal model' (1914–1950) and the current period of 'transnational capitalism'— [124] the perspective is, in many respects, ahistorical. The mere extension of the model to allow for change or to see the present as the end of an era which extends into the past, is not sufficient to make it historical. In order to qualify for this title, the analysis must be able to explain underdevelopment by reference to social

forces which have been identified as a result of a coherent and consistent method for sifting out from the complex flow of events the pattern that enable us to make sense of it now and in the past.

According to Leys, stages such as mercantilism and liberalism, are simply empirical periodization with, at most, a good deal of descriptive and heuristic value and not the product of a systematic analysis of the interplay of political and social as well as economic forces which resulted in the geographical extension of the sway of capital, or of the new struggle generated by this process. [125]

This limitation has been reflected in the observation that the dependency perspective could not satisfactorily explain why and how the conditions for further exploitation were renewed and reproduced through time and under historically altered conditions. [126] In the contemporary world setting, there are a number of developments which existing theories must be able to address satisfactorily. Among these developments are: the emergence and subsequent decline of the USA as the leading player in the world system; the implications of working class struggle; the decline of the former Soviet Union; and changes in the Southern African States.

A useful approach in this regard would be to begin the analysis with an examination of the form of foreign penetration in a specific country of the periphery, rather than setting out with the *idea* of dependency. [127] In this way the entire process of dependency may be presented in a more useful and practical way as a concrete, a *posteriori* concept, rather than an abstract,

a priori theory. [128]

Irrespective of the nature of the dependency debate, the perspective has a sufficiently strong appeal to act as a classificatory principle, which sets aside the dependency theorists from the bourgeoisie modernisation theorists [68] and as a doctrine which sets out to highlight the exploitative nature of mother country/colony or centre/periphery relationship. In a meaningful way, the proponents of the dependency perspective have been able to present a useful example of the way forward for development theory because the perspective recognises the structural constraints faced by specific 'Third World' nations in the process of development. [129]

Nevertheless, what is required is the continued search for more historical and precise explanations. The task ahead is not so much the search for a new kind of theory, but rather, the constant quest for a more clearly defined relation between theory and practice. Much light can be shed on the nature of development taking place in countries such as Guiana through the application of a genuinely historical theory. Such a theory will allow us to analyse the process of combined and uneven development of capitalism on a world scale. [130] In addition, one can also witness the way this system presents itself in the form of struggle of the working people conducted within the framework of a particular inherited structure of productive relations, forms of exploitation and exchange relationships, and a particular structure of relations of political, ideological and ethnic domination, internal and external. [131]

A serious and systematic application of historical materialism does not mean the application of a ready-made formula taken from the texts of Marx and Engles or Lenin... but the application of the methods and conclusions to be drawn from such texts plus the practice out of which emerged, and by which they have since been continually revised. [132]

The positive contributions of the dependency perspective, such as the importance of transnational or transtate relationships in explaining the course of events in underdevelopment in developing countries-must be viewed in the context of the history of the modern world. The resulting analysis should aim at synthesising the experience of the political practice of particular classes on a world scale. From this exercise, it is then possible to proceed by a process of provisional formulation [133] to examine the struggles and developments within a specific country.

Studies of historical situations must be specific enough to be related in a very explicit way to the class struggles within them. In this dissertation, such an attempt is made in the context of Guiana. Therefore, in order to highlight some of the main historical trends which influenced developments in this country, a brief examination will be made of the *World Systems*. This system of analysis has been able to clarify many of the issues raised in the dependency debate.

In addition, Guiana's economy was founded in the context of colonial relations and was characterised by this history. Therefore, to understand the way in which Guiana was part of an international web of economic and political relations it is necessary to consider theories which examine such relations. It is in this context that 'World Systems Theory' can make a

contribution by providing an analytical framework of these complex relations.

The World Systems Theory

From around the 1960s the concept of a 'single world capitalist system' which derives its momentum from the development of the capitalist mode of production at the centre, came to dominate the analytical work of Frank, Amin and Wallerstein. [134] The development in the centre impinges upon and transforms, the economies of the periphery with the collaboration of the dominant classes in the latter. [135]

The world systems perspective is also associated with the works of the Latin American structuralists, such as Raul Prebisch and Celso Furtado and those allied to them elsewhere—such as Dudley Sears. [136] The concept was also used in major arguments which appeared in the following: "Development of Underdevelopment" (A.G. Frank, in the heritage of Paul Baran's The Political Economy of Growth, the 'Structure of Dependence' (Theotonio dos Santos), 'Unequal Exchange' (Arghiri Emmanuel), Accumulation of World Capital (Samir Amin), 'Subimperialism' (Ruy Mauro Marín). It also surfaced in the Chinese Cultural Revolution as Mao's concept of the continuity of the class struggle under socialist regimes in single countries. [137]

The central position of this perspective is that the modern world comprises a single capitalist world-economy. It follows from such premise that national states are not societies that have separate, parallel histories but are parts of a whole and they also reflect that whole. Since different parts of the world played different roles in the capitalist world-economy, they have

dramatically different internal socio-economic profiles and hence distinctive politics. [138]

In order to analyse social transformation over a long historical time, and to give an explanation of both continuity and transformation, it is necessary to divide the long term into segments to observe the structural changes from one period to the next. Wallerstein noted that:

These segments are however not discrete but continuous in reality... they are stages 'in the development' of a social structure, a development which we determine however not a *priori* but a *posteriori*. That is we cannot predict the future concretely, but we can predict the past. [139]

To understand the internal class contradictions and political struggles of a particular state, it must first be situated in the world-economy. It would then be possible to understand the ways in which various political and cultural thrusts may be efforts to alter or preserve a position within this world-economy which is to the advantage or disadvantage of particular groups located within a particular state. [140]

In Guiana and other parts of the Caribbean, I will argue, there were numerous strategies employed by the British government and the Colonial Office to promote the interests of the planters and other select groups within the society, over and above the interests of the working people who comprised the majority. This was because the white minority in the society was perceived as upholding British culture and British hegemony in the region. In addition, British policy towards her colonies formed a part of the mother country's grand design in the competition for territories, monopoly in trade arrangements and overall global

domination.

The world-systems can be distinguished from the developmentalist approach of many of the dependency writers, in a number of ways. For example, while the developmentalist perspective is rigid and almost mechanical in an attempt to present its main tenets in the form of a 'theory,' the world systems perspective is dialectical, that is, the analysis takes into account changes in the material and social relations over time. Using this approach, there is little concern with the formal structure, instead, the emphasis is on the consequences for the whole and parts for maintaining and changing a certain structure at that particular historic moment. [141] According to Wallerstein:

Intelligent analysis demands knowledge of the complex texture of social reality (*historical concreteness*) within a long range perspective that observes trends and forces of the world systems which can explain what underlies and informs the diverse historically concrete phenomena. [142]

The developmentalists subscribe to the view that the fundamental economic issues revolve around the relations among the hegemonic powers of the world (mainly the countries of Western Europe, USA, Canada, Australia and South Africa). From a world systems perspective however, the relations of the hegemonic powers are only one of the many issues that confront the perspective. The long relationship between the developed countries and their colonies did not only affect the export enclave of the colonies, but this historical relationship transformed various aspects of the social and cultural forms of the life of the people of the developing countries.

The world systems perspective emerged as a consequence of the challenge to European political domination of the world. This movement called into question all Euro-centric constructions of *social reality*. Szentes' comment upon the nature of the socio-economic state of the developing countries is instructive: He stressed that the condition of these countries is not merely "economic underdevelopment," not just a sign of their not having participated in development, of their having fallen behind in progress, but it is the product of a '*special development*' which is closely connected with and derived from the development of the capitalist world. [143]

According to Baran, the observation that Western Europe left the rest of the world far behind was, by no means a matter of fortuitous accident or some racial peculiarities of different peoples. It was actually determined by the nature of Western European development itself. For the effects of Western European capitalist penetration of the outside world were enormously complex. [144] The impact was seen in the social, political and other spheres of life in the countries of the periphery. Therefore, in order to understand the present state of development and of the growth problem, it is necessary to analyse the world economic system.

Western Europe's large leap forward need not necessarily have prevented economic growth in the developing countries. Though they might not have been able to narrow the gap between themselves and the European pioneers, the developing countries could have entered a growth process of their own, attaining advanced levels of productivity and output. Indeed, the expanding

contact with the scientifically and technologically leading Western European nations might have been expected to facilitate the forward movement of the countries with which they came into contact. [145]

The evidence in the developing countries clearly indicate that these economies did not develop in this way. The following points made by Szentes, are useful in providing some indication of the results of the contact between Western Europe and the developing countries:

(1) The measure of economic backwardness in the strict sense of the word i.e. the difference between the development levels of productive forces-which already existed at the time of the rise of colonialism and determined the roles-has grown even bigger since organic relations become established between the more and the less developed countries.

(2) In the economy and society of the colonial or dependent countries such factors, phenomena and alien bodies have developed, and the direction and nature of their external economic relations have been established in such a way that

all this not only cannot be derived from the actually attained level of their internal socio-economic development, but it has also come into conflict with this development. [146]

In the light of this reality in the developing countries, any investigation into the cause of their underdevelopment and solutions aimed at improving their lot, should begin both *historically* and *logically* with the examination and evaluation of colonialism, the capitalist world economy and international division of labour.

Amin's recognition of this method of analysing the various levels of development was revealed in his observation that the world capitalist system encompassed much more than the capitalist mode of production. In addition, the impact of the capitalist

system should not be analysed as a mere juxtaposition of countries or sectors governed by the capitalist mode. [147] With few exceptions, contemporary societies are integrated into a world system. " Not a single concrete socioeconomic formation of our time can be understood except as a part of this world system." [148]

What is also necessary in this analysis is to avoid confining the investigation to the ^{economistic} 'economistic' realm. This is because economism does not allow us to proceed beyond analysing the apparent mechanisms of the functioning of the capitalist mode of production. [149] In this way we will be prevented from examining the relations between formations, such as relationships among different groups within the society, the relationship of the workers to the means of production and the employment of surplus value towards the improvement of the quality of life of the different sectors within the society, which are integrated in the same world system. Throughout the colonial era and beyond, such factors impacted in a significant way on the relationship between ex-colonies and former mother countries.

The economy of Guiana during the 1920s and 30s was outward or export oriented. The country was a primary producer of a single product-sugar-with bauxite and precious minerals used to boost the war effort or to 'prop up' the sugar industry during periods of economic depression. Most of the infrastructure and technical innovation introduced were designed to promote the exploitation of sugar and its by-products. In this way, technological input was largely limited in its impact (comprising largely of agricultural machinery or outdated factory components)

and had very little effect upon the overall development of the other sectors of the economy.

Under these conditions, the working people in Guiana took every opportunity to protest against this unfair system and organised to put in place a system which explored the full potential of the country and addressed issues which were relevant to the welfare of the majority. Working people's organisations evolved from the community and grassroots structures which evolved in the society from the social and political organisations of the *First People* through to the era of enslavement and indentureship.

Organisation at this level utilised the resources of the working people and provided leadership in the struggle of the majority to present a 'class' front in their pursuit of acceptable wages and working conditions. The Ruimveldt Workers' Incident is a demonstration of the level co-operation displayed by the working people in this struggle.

The World Systems: Its Application to Guiana

The Role of Class and Mode of Production

In Guiana, like other colonies, many of the leaders who emerged in the popular movement were from the middle class and were seen to be willing to collaborate with the European and American capitalists. According to Drayton,

... empires depended on the consent of at least some imperialised. Both conquest and decolonisation, from the Niger to the Bramaputra, are now explained in terms of the coalescence or disruption of mechanisms through which elements of indigenous communities have 'collaborated' with the outside. [150]

The terms and effectiveness of such collaboration, in the context of Guiana is given some attention in the dissertation.

Here, it will be revealed that such collaboration aided the continuation of a long established trend in which Guiana performed a function in relation to the world capitalist centres comparable to that of the feudal overlords and slave owners of a century ago. Making available to the overseas investor a stable and unorganised work force, and the monopolistic rights to the use of land and natural resources. It is the *political* presence and the *political* domination of members of this group which permit the capitalist production of commodities in the overseas countries, and also guarantee that the conditions for reproduction of land and labour remain pre-capitalist. In this way they permit the super-exploitation of human and physical resources in the developing countries. [151]

In Guiana, the plantation owners, merchants and other employers insisted upon the use of the pre-capitalist mode of production and also feudalistic practices in labour relations. In addition, the authorities promoted a 'middle class' among the black and 'coloured' [152] professionals which was expected to support the white minority. [153] Further, planters employed the strategy of giving gifts of plots of land and cattle, assistance in drainage and land preparation, rights to pasture and other incentives to encourage time-expired indentured immigrants to remain attached to the plantations. [154] This practice was the source of conflict among members of the African and East Indian sections of the working people.

However, the dissertation will show that, as a group, the

workers were aware of the objectives of the planters. This awareness was demonstrated during the Ruimveldt Incident, when the workers, irrespective of race, came together in a show of solidarity during a popular strike and demonstration organised to achieve increase wages, improved working conditions and eventually a more progressive political economy.

Commenting upon this trend in the global context, Amin informs us that:

Whenever the capitalist mode of production enters into relations with precapitalist modes of production, and subjects these to itself, transfers of value take place from the pre-capitalist to the capitalist formations, as a result of the mechanisms of *primitive accumulation*. These mechanisms do not belong only to the prehistory of capitalism; they are contemporary as well. It is these forms of primitive accumulation, modified but persistent to the advantage of the centre, that forms the domain of the theory of accumulation on a world scale. [155]

Under colonialism, the Europeans were keen to preserve some of the native structures and native authority. They were eager to preserve the organisation of domestic subsistence production because that meant commodity production on the plantations would not have to lead to full proletarianisation as is the case when capitalism becomes the dominant mode of production. [156]

The prime concern of the world systems analysis, is the *world capitalist system*, its historic-logical progression and its inner contradictions. [157] This view accounts for the nature of development which is seen in the developing countries, as derived from the logic of capitalist accumulation in the capitalist centre countries. In its extreme form, this perspective denies the people of the countries of the periphery the theoretical possibility for national-socialist struggle

originating from sections of the working people. [158]

Writers such as Wallerstein present 'labour control' primarily as a market-optimising strategy of the dominant class alone. The assumption is made that dominant classes choose freely among alternative strategies of labour control by assessing rationally the best means for maximising profits, given the geographical, demographic, technological and labour-skill conditions in which they find themselves, and given the profitable possibilities they face for selling specific products on the world market. [159] In a significant way, the social relations of production and surplus appropriation are largely ignored. By contrast, "Marxist ideas, demand that one pay attention to institutionalized *relationships* between producing and surplus-appropriating classes and allow for the ever-present potential of collective resistance form below." [160]

In an attempt to break away from the overemphasis on nation states and ahistorical model building of the modernisation theories, [161] the world systems approach concentrates on strong states and *international* domination. Politics is often reduced to economic conditions and the expression of the will of the dominant groups within each national arena. [162] The theory is based upon a formalistic theoretical model of universal reference on the one hand and the particularities of history, on the other—here it should be noted that the greatest emphasis is placed upon the patterns of development which are adequately supported by historical accounts or historical analysis. [163] These features give the perspective a close resemblance to the relationship between theory and history of the modernisation approach. [164]

It should be noted also, that a number of developments have contributed to a situation in which categories such as *centre*, *periphery* and *semi-periphery* cannot be considered homogeneous. Countries of the developing world are going through a period of differentiation, that is, the hierarchical global structure is reproduced on a lower level with new and different development problems as a result. [165] Thus some countries cease to be underdeveloped and join together with others to form new regional centres. Other countries find themselves dependent on new, regionally powerful centres.

Further, political independence, provides many developing countries with increasing bargaining power which can be used individually or collectively in the international arena. They can play off capitalist states and multinational firms against each other and play upon the East-West rivalries. Bargaining power can be increased through collective action by regional organisations such as OPEC, CARICOM or the Andean Pact grouping. [166] Regional co-operation along these lines can show the way towards challenging the traditional relationship between the capitalist countries and the developing world.

In an important way, however, part of the significance of the world systems approach is in the way this perspective has been able to raise a number of relevant issues and questions regarding the complex process of development. One aspect of contemporary developments which adds to this complexity is the rise of the Newly Industrialised Countries (NICs). This development has undermined many of the contentions of at least some versions of dependency theory. [167]

However, Frank and Wallerstein have been able to use aspects of the original formulations of the dependency school to provide new explanations for the rise of the NICs. [168] The most outstanding of these explanations is the theory of the '*new international division of labour.*' (NIDL), an explanation closely associated with the work of Froebel, Heinrichs and Kreye, [169] which attempts to come to terms with some of the changes in the global economy over the past twenty years. Its main strength is that it reorganises the selective relocation to the periphery by transnational companies and is critical of the employment practices of many companies operating in export processing zones. [170]

Although this is a significant observation in the relationship between the developing and developed countries, one must ask the question whether selective relocation by transnational companies (TNCs) is significant enough to constitute a *new international division of labour*, and if this relocation can itself explain the industrialization of parts of the periphery. There is no necessary causal link between 'Third World' industrialization and 'First World' de-industrialization—job losses in manufacturing in the advanced countries are more likely to be the product of new technology or of declining demand for finished products. [171]

This practice of the NIDL to take a single tendency in the global economy and construct a general theory is similar to the methodology of theories of development and underdevelopment. Changes in the periphery are attributed to activities and trends in the core. [172]

However, the importance of the world systems theory should be seen in its attempts to go beyond nationalist historiography, initiate the debate on *global* thinking and transformed a concern for global areas (centre, semi-periphery and periphery) into a concern for world *classes* so that *social* relationships have become more important than *spatial* relationship. [173] What world systems theory can contribute therefore is a mapping out of the constraints faced by differentially located labour movements. What has to be done, in addition, is to 'situate and describe the connecting, dynamic and moving parts of the international system, to find where ideas are traded, politics are fought and social forces assert themselves.' "...the economic determinism of the world system theorists...must be replaced by a concern for the role of politics, ideology, consciousness and class organisation." [174]

The ideas of the world systems theory have been able to provide useful insights and explanations for the developments in Guiana which are discussed in the dissertation. The explanations given by dependency and world systems theories viewed as a *posteriori* concepts have been able to locate Guiana's development during the 1920s and 30s within the British design for her colonial possessions. The colonial policy of the 'mother country' influenced the nature of production, the exploitation of resources and the political and social domination of the white minority over the non-white working people.

The dissertation also explores working people's response to capitalist exploitation through the growing consciousness of their role as a *class* in the Guianese society. The Ruimveldt

Workers' Incident which is central to the discussion, is an overt expression of this response which was made possible through co-operation of the various *sections* [175] of the working people and organisation at the level of the grassroots on the plantations, within the village communities and throughout Georgetown, the capital.

The organisational structures-estate gangs, village meetings and public gatherings-which the workers employed in the Incident, make a meaningful contribution to the literature on '*social movement unionism*.' The union leaders in Guiana were able to use these structures in pursuit of their objective of enabling workers to alter power relations in their favour in a colonial society where working people's political and economic progress was severely restricted.

An understanding of the co-ordination of the union's activities with those of the non-unionised workers (who formed a significant group in Guiana during the period under study) can contribute to the development of a more sophisticated theory in relation to the emergence of class consciousness through public demonstration and strikes (at the overt level) and covert tactics and strategies which were utilised by workers. [176] This approach to labour issues reflects the growing interest which is being taken in the '*informal*' sector of the economy, in an attempt to address the complexity of the social composition of the working people in countries such as Guiana, and their involvement in small-scale commodity production. [177]

Contribution of the Dissertation

A significant feature of this dissertation is the approach

of pursuing the analysis from the perspective of the working people who are the main actors in the study. In addition, it makes a contribution towards the accurate reconstruction and necessary deconstruction of some aspects of the historical development of the Guianese working people. Of importance, is the claim of perpetual conflict among members of the main racial sections (Africans and East Indians). The analysis explores the way social and religious ties, along with exploitation at the work place, brought the workers together in struggle- during the Ruimveldt Incident- against the white ruling class, the source of their exploitation.

This struggle led to the effective organisation of several categories of workers through the transformation of grassroots organisations and the establishment of links with labour organisations regionally and internationally. Out of this development emerged large labour unions such as the British Guiana Labour Union, the British Guiana Workers League and the Manpower Citizens Association.

Another contribution is the way the dissertation locates the social context in which the relations of production gave rise to the exploitation of working people in Guiana. The activities of the capitalists-the need to maximise profits, entrepreneurship, the export of capital to the metropolis, and the dominance of sugar in the colonial economy-gave rise to a particular social structure and division of labour in which the workers were suppressed and deprived of the opportunity of exploring the best means of improving their standard of living.

The historical approach adopted, highlights the 'special'

nature of Guiana's development which was brought about by the arrival of the Europeans. The Guianese society, since the advent of European capitalists became tied to the economy of the mother country in a relationship which was dominated by the metropolis.

The historical analysis also examines the groups and 'classes' which emerged in the society. These sections of the population interacted in a colonial society characterised by unfree labour regimes and foreign domination. The European ruling class strove to maintain order and a suitable environment for the exploitation of raw materials, while the working people were involved in a constant struggle to influence the terms and conditions of their employment and to participate in the administration of their country.

During the 1920s although working people in Guiana were not fully 'proletarianized,' they presented a 'class' front in their struggle for workers rights. The Ruimveldt Incident demonstrated that through the popularity of the strike and the possibility of achieving much needed reform in wage rates and overall labour relations, working people responded in a demonstration of unity and co-ordinated activities.

Working people's ties were constantly reinforced in their work environment and also at the village level. This interaction gave rise to the organisational structures, the level of consciousness and the discipline which were crucial elements in the formation of benevolent societies, workers unions and the early political organisations in the country. Organisation at the level of the grassroots, became the forum out of which leaders of the people emerged to participate in the national party

politics which paved the way for working people's participation in the administration of their society.

The 'world systems' perspective adopted, has been able to locate Guiana's historical development within the context of the global political economy. This highlighted the main features of the country's colonial relationship with Britain and the industrial countries of Europe and North America. The relationship revealed colonial trade relations and Guiana's role in Britain's development. In addition, the stagnation of the peasantry in Guiana, the development of a mono-crop economy through the overemphasis on a single economic activity and the way these developments impacted upon the Guianese society and workers' development.

'Dependency' and the 'world systems', as applied in this dissertation, provide useful insights into the nature of development in Guiana and, to some extent, countries within the Caribbean region. The analysis reveals that strike action in the country is deeply embedded in the uneven penetration of 'peripheral capitalism' [178] and under-development. In the light of this observation, labour development in Guiana was analysed within the context of local, regional and international forces which in turn are part of the uneven and selective incorporation of Guiana into a world system of capitalism. [179]

This reality accounts for the complex nature of protest action in ex-colonial economies such as Guiana. The dissertation examines the Ruimveldt Incident through a process which accounts for the wide variety in the scope, objective, and significance of the Incident to the various sections of the Guianese working

people. In this process factors such as the changing role of the labour movement, the importance of neighbourhood and self-help organisation, at the community and regional levels, and the needs of marginalised groups (such as female workers) are given priority.

However, this dissertation is not without its limitations. The most obvious is the necessity to restrict the treatment of resistance and the evolution of working people's organisation in Guiana within the limited time frame of the 1920s and 30s. This period is just a brief 'chapter' in working people's struggle against colonial domination.

However, coming out of this experience is the deeply felt need to undertake a careful reconstruction and rigorous analysis of past and present trends in working people's development which covers a much wider period of the history of Guiana and the Caribbean region. It is hoped that this effort contributes to serious research and documentation of this and related areas of the region's development.

Chapter 3 examines the considerations which influenced Britain's overseas expansion and the impact of the European presence on the lives of the people in Guiana. The contact between metropole and colony gave rise to that '*special*' form of development in Guiana which is examined below.

FOOTNOTES

1. Ronaldo Munck, [with a Foreword by Robin Cohen] The New International Labour Studies: An Introduction. (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1988.) p. 106-107.
2. Enslavement was legally terminated in 1838 and Indentureship 1917.
3. Walter Rodney, " *The Birth of the Guyanese Working Class and the First Sugar Strikes 1840-41 and 1847.*" Review no. 4, Spring 1981.
4. The British Guiana Labour Union (BGLU) was established in 1919.
5. Roger Southall (ed.) Labour and Unions in Asia and Africa: Contemporary Issues (London: Macmillan Press, 1988) p. 3.
6. Ibid., also P. Waterman, " *Workers in the Third World,*" Monthly Review, 1977 29, 4.
7. Ibid., see also M. Seldon, " *The Proletariat, Revolutionary Change, and the State in China and Japan, 1850-1950,*" (1983) in Wallerstein (ed.) Aristocrats and Plebians in African Trade Unions? Lagos Port and Dock Workers' Organisations and the Struggle (The Hague: Institute of Social Studies, 1983.) 58-120.
8. Munck, The New International... p. 107.
9. Ibid. p. 108.
10. Munck, The New International... p. 107.
11. Michaela von Freyhold, " *Labour Movements and Popular Struggles in Africa,*" Review of African Political Economy 39, September 1987, 23-32.
12. Ibid.
13. Brian Moore, Race, Power and Social Segmentation in Colonial Society Guiana After Slavery 1838-1891 (Philadelphia: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1992.)
14. Rodney, A History of...
15. See chapter i for an definition of this concept as applied to Guiana, also Moore, Race, Power... p. 23.
16. R. Cohen, " *Resistance and Hidden forms of Consciousness Amongst African Workers,*" Review of African Political Economy 19, September/December 1980, see C. von Onselen, 'Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia 1900-1933 (London: Pluto Press, 1976.)
17. von Onselen, 'Chibaro'...

18. Rhoda Howard, " *Third World Trade Unions as Agencies of Human Rights: The Case of Commonwealth Africa*," in Roger Southall (ed.) Trade Unions and the New Industrialisation of the Third World (London: Zed Books, 1988.)
19. Liston Pope, Millhands and Preachers: A Study of Gastonia. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942.) p. 208.
20. Ibid., pp. 187-188.
21. That part of the plantation where the dwellings (usually barrack-type structures) of African and East Indian workers were located.
22. On the sugar estates, workers conducted their tasks in small groups called 'gangs.' It should be stressed that strong bonds of loyalty were forged among workers of the same gang.
23. The 'Immigration Agent' was appointed to act as a mediator between the East Indian immigrant workers and the planters. In Guiana, the tenure of Agent-General Crosby lasted for twenty two years. Crosby stood in the tradition of colonial paternalism, and worked to uphold the reputation that his office served the indentured labourers *in loco parentis*. However, this attitude proved to be too liberal for the plantation system and the Governors under whom Crosby served gave him little support. Such was Crosby's impact upon the working people that it became a common practice in the country for all subsequent Immigration Agents came to be colloquially referred to as 'Crosby,' see Rodney, A History... pp. 151-152, and Nath, A History of Guiana. Vol. 2 (London: 1975.)
24. Rodney, A History... p. 178.
25. Indentured labourers who completed the period of their contract on the plantation.
26. During 1924, Critchlow insisted that the BGLU addressed issues which affected estate workers, see Chase, A History...
27. In 1924 it was illegal for the unions to employ picketing as a protest strategy.
28. See for example Munck, The New International... pp. 106-107.
29. M. Shahabuddeen, Constitutional Development in Guyana 1621-1978 (Georgetown: Guyana Printers Ltd., 1978.) p. 414.
30. The General-Secretary and other Officials of the TUC were consulted on issues relating to labour in Guiana and the West Indies.

31. J.T. Dunlop, Industrial Relations Systems. (New York: Holt, 1958), also A. Flanders, Trade Unions. (London: Hutchinson and Co. Ltd., 1968) and Rosemary Aris, " *Continuity and Change: The Role of Trade Union in State Industrial Relations Policy in Britain 1910-1921.*" Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Warwick, 1993, p. 3.
32. Aris, " *Continuity and Change:...*p. 4.
33. Ibid., p. 5.
34. The fact that Critchlow had the confidence of the workers at this time (during the 1920s and specifically during the workers' incident in 1924) was well known by the employers and the government. They took advantage of this as they knew it was only Critchlow who was capable of getting the workers to resume work on their (the employers) terms. They set out to destroy Critchlow because they knew they had no intention of conceding to the workers' demands.
35. Small traders who moved around the city and villages on foot or animal drawn carts peddling their goods-usually ground provision, fruits and fish.
36. Munck, The New International... p. 141.
37. The 'First People' of Guiana lived in organised communities and pursued a livelihood based on fishing, agricultural production, weaving and other designs. Their activities reflected a high level of social organisation based on co-operation and respect for the environment. They consistently resisted European attempts to exploit and enslave them.
38. For an analysis of this incident, see Nehusi, " *The 1905 Protest in Guyana: Cause, Course and Consequences.*" Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Guyana, 1981.
39. A. Lewis, Labour in the West Indies: The Birth of a Workers Movement (London and Port-of-Spain: New Beacon Books 1977.)
40. R. Cohen, " *Resistance and Hidden Forms of Consciousness among African Workers,*" in Review of African Political Economy, 19, 1980 p. 8.
41. Ashton Chase, A History of Trade Unionism in Guyana 1900-1961. (Georgetown: New Guyana Company Ltd., 1964.)
42. K. Nehusi, " *The Development of Political Organisation and Political Consciousness in British Guiana, 1870-1964: The Conscientization of the Middle Class and the Masses.*" Ph.D. Dissertation, University College, London, 1989.

43. Tony Martin, " *Marcus Garvey the Great Emancipator: Notes on His Universal Negro Improvement Association in Guyana.*" Paper Presented at the International Conference: Genesis of a Nation II, Pegasus Hotel, Georgetown, Guyana.
44. Ibid.
45. Hugh W.L. Payne, " *A Look at the African Diaspora 150 Years After the Abolition of Slavery in the Anglophone Caribbean (with special reference to Guyana)* " Paper Presented at the Caribbean Symposium on the Occasion of the 15th Anniversary of Guyana's Attainment of Republican Status Which Coincided With the Observation of 150 Years Since the Abolition of Slavery in the English Speaking Caribbean and Black History Month in the USA, Columbia University 23, February, 1985.
46. Nevin Jones, " *Some Labour Disputes in 20th Century British Guiana: Towards a Dialectical Analysis. The Ruimveldt Workers' Revolt of 1905 and 1924.*" (n.d. Occasional Paper.)
47. Ann Spackman, " *Official Attitude and Official Violence: The Ruimveldt Massacre, Guyana, 1924.*" *Social and Economic Studies* XXII (September, 1973.) 320.
48. These documents are lodged in the TUC files at the Modern Records Centre [MRC], University of Warwick.
49. William H. Knowles, *Trade Union Development and Industrial Relations in the British West Indies.* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954.)
50. M. Cross and G. Heuman, (eds.) *Labour in the Caribbean: From Emancipation to Independence.* (London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1988.)
51. Zinn Henry, *Labour Relations and Industrial Conflict in Commonwealth Caribbean Countries.* (Port-of-Spain: Syncreators Ltd., 1979.)
52. Lewis, *Labour in the West Indies...*
53. Basdeo Samaroo, " *The Trinidad Workingmen's Association and the Origin of Popular Protest in a Crown Colony.*" *Social and Economic Studies* vol. 21 No. 2 June, 1972.
54. Chase, *A History...* p. 73. In 1926, the Hon. A.A. Cipriani represented the Trinidad Workingmen's Association at the West Indies Labour Conference, hosted by Critchlow in Georgetown.
55. See Cross and Heuman (eds.) *Labour in the Caribbean...*
56. Richard Hart, " *Pioneers of Labour Organisation in the English-Speaking Caribbean Area.*" Paper Presented at a Symposium 'Visions of Change in the Caribbean Area Labour Movement,' Claxton House, London, 17 June 1995.

57. _____ " *Aspects of Early Caribbean Struggles: Some Lessons of Our Times.*" Paper Prepared for the Symposium 'From Butler to Weekes,' London, 15 June 1995.
58. _____ " *Origin and Development of the Working Class in the English-Speaking Caribbean Area 1897-1937.*" (London: Community Education Trust n.d. 1984.
59. _____ " *Trade Unionism in the English-Speaking Caribbean: The Formative Years and the Caribbean Labour Congress.*" in Susan Craig (ed.) Contemporary Caribbean: A Sociological Reader. Vol. 2. (Maracas College Press.) pp. 59-96.
60. This involved the modernisation of the industry through greater investment in advanced factory components and improved drainage systems. In addition, from around the 1890s, production became concentrated on a few large plantations which incorporated the lands of smaller and less efficient proprietors. See Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves...
61. Free of the restrictions of their contracts, ex-indentured labourers, moved around the country in order to locate the plantations paying the most attractive wages.
62. Moore, Race, Power... p. 215.
63. Encouraged by the Colonial Office, the British Guiana Administration issued a 'CONCESSIONS MEMORANDUM' in 1901. This Memorandum declared the entire colony except the settled portion of the coastland as being opened to applicants for concessions. The concessions areas included all the land beyond the Moruka River on the north coast and above an imaginary line passing through the foot of the lowest falls of the Cuyuni, Mazaruni, Essequibo, Demerara, Berbice and Corentyne Rivers. This area was afterwards generally defined as the 'interior' (see Great Britain, 'The British Guiana Commission.' London: 1927.) p. 24.
64. Alan Lancaster, " *The Unconquered Wilderness: A Historical Analysis of the Failure to Open the Hinterland of British Guiana, 1901-1919.*" in The History Gazette, University of Guyana No. 58, July 1993, p. 9, see also, [NAG] 'Report on the Construction of a Railway to the Interior,' Presented to the Governor, November 22, 1913.
65. Lancaster, " *The Unconquered...*" also Hodgson to Elgin, 151, May 19, 1908.
66. Ibid., also [NAG] 'Report on the Construction of a Railway...'
67. The largest grassland region in Guiana, located in the south western part of the country.

68. Lancaster, " *The Unconquered...*" the Government took the precaution to employ an Agricultural specialist from the mother country to conduct a feasibility study on the agricultural viability of the area along the railway embankment.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. Moore, Race... p. 215.
72. Alan Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves: The Political Economy of British Guiana, 1838-1904 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972.) p. 258.
73. Orthodox Marxists subscribe to a 'stagist' version of history, whereby all societies pass through similar stages of development. In keeping with this view, capitalism and the influence of the colonising powers exert a moderating effect on 'backward' colonial possessions in Asia and Africa. See Ray Kiely, Sociology and Development: The Impasse and Beyond. (London: University College London (UCL) Press, 1995.) p. 15, also K. Marx and F. Engels, On Colonialism. (Moscow: Progress, 1974.) pp. 40 and 81.
74. Tamas Szentes, The Political Economy of Underdevelopment. (Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1983.) p. 22.
75. James A. Caporaso and Behrouz Zare, " *An Interpretation and Evaluation of Dependency Theory*." in Heraldo Munoz (ed.) From Dependency to Development: Strategies to Overcome Underdevelopment and Inequality. (Boulder Colorado: Westview Press, 1981.) p. 53.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid., also S. Amin, Imperialism and Unequal Development. (Sussex England: John Spiers, 1977); S. Amin, G. Arrighi, A.G. Frank and I. Wallerstein, Dynamics of Global Crisis. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1982); Peter Evans, Dependent Development: The Alliance of Multinational State, and Local Capital in Brazil. (Princeton NJ: Princetown University Press) and Class, State and Dependence in East Asia: Lessons for Latin Americanists. (1987); F.H. Cardoso, Dependency and Development in Latin America. (1982.)
78. Caporaso and Zare, " *An Interpretation...*"
79. Benjamin J. Cohen, The Question of Imperialism: The Political Economy of Dominance and Dependence. (London: Macmillan, 1973.) p. 190.
80. Ibid., p. 91.
81. Ibid., pp. 91-92.

82. Ian Roxborough, The Theories of Underdevelopment. (London: Macmillan Education, 1979.) p. 55.

83. See for example, Roger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe (eds.) Studies in the Theory of Imperialism. (New York: Longman Inc., 1972.) pp. 93-94.

84. V.I. Lenin, Imperialism The Highest Stage of Capitalism: A Popular Outline. (3rd ed.) (London: Lawrence and Wishart Ltd., 1948), also *ibid*.

85. *Ibid*.

86. *Ibid*., p. 108, also Roxborough, p. 56.

87. See E. Mandel, Late Capitalism. (London: New Left Books, 1975.)

88. A major argument in relation to some of the theories of imperialism is that they are incomplete and restricted, rather than absolutely incorrect. See Roxborough, p. 56.

89. Thomas Hodgkin, " *Some African and Third World Theories of Imperialism* " in Owen and Sutcliffe, (eds.) Studies in... p. 94.

90. For the ideas of Marcus Garvey, see Rupert Lewis. Marcus Garvey: Anti-Colonial Champion. (Kent: Whitstable Litho Ltd., 1987); Edward Wilmot Blyden was born in the West Indian island of St. Thomas in 1832 " but reacted against the treatment of his people in the New World by migrating to Liberia in 1851. He was convinced that the only way to bring respect and dignity to African peoples was by building progressive new 'empires' in Africa. See R. Lewis and M. Warner-Lewis (eds.) Garvey, Africa, Europe, the Americas. (New Jersey: Africa World Press Inc., 1994); Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth. (London: Penguin Books, 1983.); Walter Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (1989); C.Y. Thomas, The Poor and the Powerless: Economic Policy and Change in the Caribbean. (London: Latin America Bureau [Research and Action] Limited, 1988) and S. Amin, Imperialism... (1976) and Eurocentrism. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989.)

91. Hodgkin, p. 95.

92. *Ibid*.

93. Walter Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1989.)

94. Diana Hunt, Economic Theories of Development: An Analysis of Competing Paradigms. (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989) p. 199, also P. O'Brien, " *A Critique of Latin American Theories of Development*." Occasional Paper No. 12., Institute of Latin American Studies, University of Glasgow, 1979.

95. Roxborough, p. 27.

96. Hunt, Economic... p. 48.

97. Roxborough, p. 27.

98. Regis do Castro Andrade, " *The Economics of Underdevelopment: The State and Politics in ECLA's Doctrine, 1949-1964.*" Occasional Paper No. 29., University of Glasgow, 1979.

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid.

101. Cohen, The Question of Imperialism... p. 90.

102. Ibid.

103. T. Dos Santos, " *The Structure of Dependence.*" American Economic Review, (1970) Reprinted in I. Livingstone, (ed.) Development Economics and Policy. (Allen and Unwin, 1981.)

104. Henrique Fernando Cardoso, " *The Consumption of Dependency Theory in the United States.*" Latin American Research Review. 12:3, pp. 7-24. Published in Portuguese in Cardoso, 1980, pp. 89-108, see also Robert A. Packenham, The Dependency Movement: Scholarship and Politics in Development Studies. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard, 1992.) pp. 7-8.

105. Packenham, The Dependency Movement... p. 7.

106. Ibid.

107. See J. Samuel Valenzuela and Arturo Valenzuela, " *Modernization and Dependency Alternative Perspective in the Study of Latin American Underdevelopment.*" in Heraldo Munoz (ed.) From Dependency to Development Strategies to Overcome Underdevelopment and Inequality. (Boulder, Colorado: West View Press, 1981.) p. 24, also Bagu, " *Economia de la Sociedad Colonial.*"

108. Roxborough, p. 45.

109. Ibid., pp. 44-45.

110. A.G. Frank, " *The Development of Underdevelopment.*" in Wilber (ed.) The Political Economy... pp. 103-113.

111. Ibid.

112. E. Laclau, " *Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America.*" Left Review (67, May/June 1971) also Hunt, Economic Theories... p. 177.

113. For a more elaborate explanation of this see B. Hindess and P. Hirst, Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production. (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975) also Hunt, Economic Theories... p. 177.

114. Hunt, Economic Theories... p. 177.

115. R. Brenner, " *On Sweezy, Frank and Wallerstein.*" *New Left Review.* (104, July-August 1977.)
116. Hunt, *Economic Theories...* p. 177.
117. Ibid., p. 179.
118. Adamson, *Sugar Without Slaves...* p. 257.
119. Hunt, *Economic Theories...* p. 179.
120. F. Cardoso and E. Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America.* (University of California Press, 1979. first published in Spanish in 1971) see also Packenham, p. 10.
121. Packenham, p. 56.
122. O'Brien, " *A Critique of Latin American Theories of Development.*" also Colyn Leys, *The Rise and Fall of Development Theory.* (London: James Curry, 1996.) p. 47.
123. Leys, *The Rise and Fall...* p. 48.
124. Valenzuela and Valenzuela, " *Modernization and Dependency...*" in Munoz (ed.) *From Dependency...* p. 28.
125. Leys, *The Rise and Fall...* p. 54.
126. See criticism of Frank in Ankie M.M. Hoogvelt, *The Third World in Global Development.* (London: Macmillan, 1994.) p. 172.
127. Ray Kiely, *Sociology and Development: The Impasse and Beyond.* (London: UCL Press, 1995.) p. 51.
128. Ibid.
129. See Leys, *The Rise and Fall...* p. 55.
130. Kiely, *Sociology...* p. 51.
131. Ibid.
132. Ibid.
133. Leys, *The Rise and Fall...* p. 55.
134. Ibid., pp. 75-76.
135. See Hunt, *Economic Theories...* p. 205.
136. Ibid., this theme is elaborated in S. Amin, *Imperialism and Unequal Development.* (Harvard University Press, 1976.) and (by the same author) *Accumulation on a World Scale.* (Monthly Review Press, 1974), also A.G. Frank, *Dependent Accumulation and Underdevelopment.* (Macmillan, 1978.)

137. Immanuel Wallerstein, " *The Present State of the Debate on World Inequality.*" in A. Mitchell, Seligson and J.T. Passe-Smith, (eds.) Development and Underdevelopment: The Political Economy of Inequality. (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993.) p. 220.
138. Ibid., also Wallerstein, " *Class Struggle in China?* " Monthly Review XXV, 4 September, 1973, pp. 55-58.
139. Szentes, The Political Economy... see chapter i.
140. Wallerstein, " *The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis.*" Comparative Studies in Society and History. Vol. 16, No. 4, 1974. 387-415.
141. Wallerstein, " *The Present State...*" in Mitchell et al. (eds.) Development... p. 221, also Wallerstein, The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origin of the European World-Economy. (New York and London: Academic Press, 1974) and " *The Rise and Future Demise...*"
142. Wallerstein, " *The Present State...*"
143. Ibid.
144. Szentes, The Political Economy...
145. P.A. Baran, The Political Economy of Growth. (New York and London: Monthly Review Inc., 1957.) pp. 140-141.
146. Ibid., p. 140.
147. Szentes, The Political Economy... p. 144. For example, according to the calculations of S.J. Patel, the share of the underdeveloped countries in the world income was 65 per cent in 1850 and 22 per cent in 1960. (S.J. Patel, " *The Economic Distance Between Nations: Its Origin, Measurement and Outlook.*" The Economic Journal. No. 293, London: 1964, pp. 119-131. For similar calculations or data, see also S. Kuznets, " *Underdeveloped Countries and the Pre-Industrial Phase in the Advanced Countries.*" also A.M. Agarwala and S.P. Singh (eds.) The Economics of Underdevelopment. (Oxford University Press, 1958.) p. 145.
148. S. Amin, Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment. Vol. I, (Trans. Brian Pearce) (London: Monthly Review Press, 1974.) p. 3.
149. Ibid.
150. Ibid.
151. Richard Drayton, " *'Collaboration' at the Centre: Empire and British Culture in the 18th Century.*" Text of Address to 64th Anglo-American Conference, London, 29 June 1995.

152. This group comprised individuals of mixed race (largely European and African). Many colored professionals and politicians rose to prominence through the support and connections of their white fathers.
153. Many middle class politicians supported issues presented by the plantocracy in an attempt to gain recognition from the mother country and foster their own careers. See for example H.A. Lutchman, From Colonialism to Co-operative Republic: Aspects of Political Development in Guyana (Rio Piedras: Institute of Caribbean Studies, University of Puerto Rico, 1974.) pp. 99-133.
154. A.M.M. Hoogvelt, The Third World in Global Development. (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982.) p. 178.
155. See for example Leslie M. Potter, "Indian and African-Guianese Village Settlement Patterns and Inter-Group Relationships, 1871-1921." The History Gazette University of Guyana, Turkeyen, September, 1992.
156. Amin, Accumulation... p. 3.
157. Theda Skocpol, "Wallerstein's World Capitalist System: A Theoretical and Historical Critique." in M.A. Seligson and J.T. Passe-Smith (eds.), Development and Underdevelopment: The Political Economy of Inequality. (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc., 1993.) pp. 231-237. [Paper Reproduced from the American Journal of Sociology vol. 82 (March 1977): 1075-1091.]
158. Ibid.
159. Writers such as Bendix, "Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered." Comparative Studies in Society and History. 9 (June); A.G. Frank, "Sociology of Development and Underdevelopment of Sociology." Catalyst 2 (Summer 1966) and C. Tilly (ed.) "Modernisation Theory and the Comparative Study of Society: A Critical Perspective." Comparative Study in Society and History. 15 (March 1975), have been criticised for promoting the nation-state as the sole unit of analysis and assuming that all countries can potentially follow a single path (or parallel and converging paths) of evolutionary development from "tradition" to "modernity", see *ibid.*, p. 231.
160. Skocpol, in Development... pp. 234.
161. According to Skocpol, Wallerstein's world-systems approach falls prey to the "mirror image" trap. That is, world-systems theory may not offer new answers because it suffers from many of the same weaknesses of modernization theory, having arisen in polemic opposition to modernization theory rather than as a clean break with past analysis, see *ibid.*, p. 231.
162. Skocpol, p. 234.
163. *Ibid.*, p. 235.

164. Ibid.

165. Bjorn Hettne, Development Theory and the Three Worlds: Towards a International Political Economy of Development (London: Longman Scientific and Technical, 1995.) p. 265.

166. Hunt, Economic Theories... p. 191, also B. Warren, "Imperialism and Capitalist Industrialisation." New Left Review. 81 (September /October 1973.)

167. Kiely, Sociology and Development... p. 89.

168. Ibid.

169. Ibid., see F. Froebel, J. Heinrichs, O. Kreye, "The Tendency Towards a New International Division of Labour." Review 1, 1977, 73-88. and The New International Division of Labour. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.)

170. Kiely, Sociology and Development... p. 99.

171. Ibid., also D. Gordon, "The Global Economy: New Edifice or Crumbling Foundations?" New Left Review 1988, no. 168, 24-64.

172. Ibid., see Roger Southall (ed.) Trade Unions and the New Industrialisation of the Third World (London: Zed, 1988.) Introduction.

173. Ibid., quoted in Roger Southall (ed.) Labour and Unions in Asia and Africa: Contemporary Issues (London: Macmillan Press, 1988.) Introduction.

174. Ibid., quoted in R. Cohen and P. Waterman, "World Systems Theory and International Labour Studies," 1986, A Review Article, (mimeo).

175. Mainly African dock workers from Georgetown and East Indian estate workers on the East Bank of Demerara.

176. See Munck, The New International... pp. 138-39.

177. Small scale traders moved around the city and village communities with animal drawn cart and sold their goods (items such as cow's milk, fish, ground provision, garments and fruits) from door to door.

178. R. Cohen, J. Copans and P.C.W. Gutkind (eds.) African Labour History (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1978) see Introduction.

179. Ibid.

CHAPTER III

The Colonial State: Guiana's Role in Britain's Overseas Expansion

If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favour freedom, and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without ploughing up the ground...Power concedes nothing without a demand...It never did and it never will.

Frederick Douglass: Quoted in Jagan, The West on Trial... p. 188.

A significant feature of the colonial character of British Guiana can be found in the dominance of the plantocracy in almost every aspect of life in the society. For example, the planters' control of the legislature, made it possible for them to persist with the cultivation of sugar even during periods when this policy was clearly against the interests of the majority of the people in the colony. The planters' influence was also exercised in other important areas of decision making and social control, for example, the electoral process, the nature of the franchise and the state of the constitution.

The role of the Colonial Office was central in this process. On every issue in the colony's history, from immigration, indentureship and the character of the labour laws, to village legislation and national development projects, this Office showed a preference for the interests of sugar over those of the other sectors. Very often this position was revealed in the failure of the Secretary of State for the colonies to formulate specific policies to govern various aspects of colonial activities. In addition, there is also the belief that the excesses of the 'saccharine oligarchs' [1] were to be tolerated in preference to a complete take over by the Africans and East Indians who

comprised the majority in the society.

The Background

Colonialism as a concept and practice, is a feature of the early history of Great Britain. However, in relation to Guiana and the West Indies, the nineteenth century brought significant developments in the nature of the Britain's colonising activities. In the 1830s, "a case for reviving the 'lost art of colonisation' was put forward by the Colonial Reform Movement..."

[2] This movement which was led by Edward Gibbon Wakefield, emphasised the economic benefits of colonisation. The movement was motivated by the search for capital accumulation, investment opportunities and expanding markets to promote the economic development of Britain. In pursuing this objective, the colonisers looked to the work of Adam Smith for guidance. [3]

Wakefield believed that the main problem facing the British economy in the 1830s was shortage of profitable investment opportunities. In spite of technological advance- and because of artificial barriers to trade- the limits of the field of employment for capital had not expanded sufficiently to absorb, at existing rates of profit and wages, the increase in capital accumulation and population which had taken place since 1815. [4] Britain was suffering from a general glut of capital; all trades were 'over stocked' and the distribution of capital within the country proved to be inadequate to bring about the desired relief. The order of the day was huge losses in investment and low profits.

Wakefield was attracted by Smith's dynamic approach to the gains from foreign trade. This aspect of Smith's theory was also

noted by other students of the field such as Allyn Young, J.H. Williams and Hla Myint. [5] The observation of these men is significant because of its relevance to the case for colonisation. Smith spoke of two types of gains from trade: the gain through increased productivity and the gain via the 'vent for surplus.' [6]

Widened markets increased productivity by permitting and stimulating greater division of labour and the use of improved techniques. The notion of 'vent for surplus,' or the idea that trade 'carries out that surplus part of the procedure of... land and labour for which there is no demand at home, 'clearly assumes that prior to the opening of trade, resources are not fully employed. [7] Additional support was given to the theories of colonisation by the followers of Ricardo. It should be stressed, however, that there was not total consensus with Smith's position on the issue. [8]

In addition, to the economic considerations, there were other factors which motivated the colonialists. According to Gallagher and Deny, " Expansion was not simply a necessity without which industrial growth might cease, but a moral duty to the rest of humanity." [9] The Victorians were convinced that they had a mission to promote improvement and 'civilisation' throughout the world.

The dominant Victorian view of the period was suffused with a vivid sense of superiority and self-righteousness. In keeping with Victorian standards, the nations of the world were placed in a hierarchical ranking order according to the proven capacity of each for freedom and enterprise. [10] In this ranking, Great

Britain occupied the top position and the countries of Asia and Africa the bottom rounds. [11] The British felt that they were the most equipped to embark upon the task of raising the rest of the world up the steps of progress which they themselves had climbed. The view was held that countries could only develop by imitating the developmental strategy adopted by the British. Expansion in all its forms seemed not only natural and necessary but inevitable; it was pre-ordained and irreproachably right. [12] In Guiana, these considerations were manifest in almost every aspect of the relationship between colony and mother country.

The Case of British Guiana

In 1803, the British imperial authorities replaced the Dutch, for the last time, [13] in the governing of Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice [these colonies were later merged to form British Guiana]. According to the 'Articles of Capitulation,' the form of Government and the laws in force were to be preserved:

The laws and usages of the colony shall remain in force and be respected, the mode of taxation now in use be adhered to, and the inhabitants shall enjoy the public exercise of their religion in the same manner as heretofore; no new establishment shall be introduced without the consent of the Court of Policy as the legislature of the colony... [14]

Within this constitutional framework there existed four distinct political authorities besides the Judicial institutions: namely the Governor, the Court of Policy, the College of Kiezers and the College of Financial Representative. [15]

The Governor was appointed by the parent Government (British after 1814) and was the Chief Executive Officer, in charge of the

overall administration and security of the Colony. The Court of Policy composed of eight members, four of whom, inclusive of the Governor, were ex-officio, while the remaining four were styled 'Colonial Members,' two from Demerara and two from Essequibo. One member was required to retire annually according to seniority—the eldest from Demerara in the first year, the eldest for Essequibo in the second and so on. The Court of Policy was the Legislature of the colony. [16]

Within this body the Governor had the power, at any moment to suspend any proceedings or discussion, and of voting upon any question; and in the event of votes being equal, of voting again and thus creating a majority. This was known as the 'Double Vote.' [17]

The college of Kiezers were elected for life by inhabitants owning 'twenty-five Negroes.' They were fourteen in number, seven from Demerara and seven from Essequibo. Their duty was simply to nominate a double number of candidates for any vacancy which occurred in the colonial seats of the Court of Policy, out of which that Court itself elects its own members. [18]

In 1796, the Court of Policy was given the added responsibility of voting to raise Colonial taxes (this function was to prove quite problematic in the future). This Court comprised six members, three from Essequibo and three from Demerara who were to be called the 'Financial Representatives.' They were elected biennially in the same way as the College of Kiezers. This provision was reenacted by Proclamation in July 1831 for the united colony of British Guiana. [19]

From a very early period, the planters emerged to dominate

the economic and political life of this colony. At first, because they comprised the majority of the 'free citizens' and later, through the property and other qualifications which were attached to the franchise. These were manipulated over the years to keep the country's majority outside the political machinery. The British Government, from time to time attempted to justify this blatant denial of people's empowerment by highlighting the need for the metropole to play the role of caretaker. [20]

By the mid- nineteenth century, the system of government provoked numerous comments from local citizens and colonial officials. For example, Anthony Trollope referred to it as " a mild despotism, tempered by sugar." [21] Former Stipendiary Magistrate Des Voeux, labelled the system " a despotism of sugar- and a sugar which ... is apt to turn acid." [22] However, the observation of former Chief Justice Joseph Beaumont, in 1871 is very instructive:

Its system of government is not only that of a complete and highly organised oligarchy, an irresponsible oligarchy founded on the traditions of slavery, and an absentee oligarchy which rules by deputy. Through Her Majesty's Government holds the supreme executive authority..., the general legislative power is almost equally shared by the planters' nominee in the Court of Policy, while the power of the purse-strings is wholly at the control of their nominee in the Combined Court. [23]

This constitutional arrangement, although subjected to minor structural changes over the years, did not change in any significant way for over seventy-five years. The absence of change was not due to the lack of pressure from the people for desirable constitutional change but rather, to reluctance on the part of the Colonial authorities to antagonise the planting interest which exercised a monopoly of the political process. [24]

This 'planter' monopoly was maintained and strengthened over a period of the history of the colony due to the fact that a large section of the population was kept out of the electoral process and there was no effective constitutional challenge to the planting interest.

The planter class had consistently argued that the welfare of the sugar economy was synonymous with the welfare of the colony- if not the survival of English culture in the region. [25] The planters argued that in an environment of competing economic interests, it was crucial that they control the political process. [26] They exercised enough influence over the officials at the Colonial Office and, to some extent, significant economic lobby in Britain, to sustain their argument over a considerable period. In addition, the policy-or the absence of it- of the Colonial Office towards Guiana and the Caribbean region during a significant part of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century, facilitated such dominant and laissez faire attitudes by the planters. [27]

Over the years, the planters exercised this control in the furtherance of the single interest of sugar. The exercise of this monopoly produced serious conflicts with other interests within the society and even at times, the Colonial authorities. The clash with the Colonial authorities emerged from the tendency of the planter class to use its monopoly to broaden and strengthen its power base at the expense of the Colonial Office. [28] Other sectors of the economy, and the community, also challenged the exercise of this monopoly. Their main argument was based on the fact that this 'planter stranglehold' on the government and the

economy, has contributed to stagnation in potentially viable economic ventures outside of sugar and the exclusion of the non-white majority from political representation. This dissenting group was made up of coloured professionals, [29] a Portuguese commercial class and the predominantly African and East Indian working people. [29] These groups launched a determined attack within and outside parliament- on all forms of oppression and discrimination in the society.

During the late nineteenth, to the early twentieth century, it was the coloured professional and Portuguese commercial class- comprising the middle class- that provided the leadership to mark the beginning of sustained political development in Guiana. Although there was some degree of alignment with the more revolutionary working people, the role of the middle class as a group committed to effect fundamental changes is questionable. Commenting on middle class leadership, Burrowes expressed the view that " leadership positions... were usually sought by individuals because of the prestige conferred on them and not because of the service they thought they could render..." [30]

On occasions when these leaders of the people proved to be co-operative towards assisting the mother country in implementing her policies, they were often rewarded. Acknowledgement was also given for the middle class role in keeping the rank and file in check and not making any serious demands on the systems, in effect, the middle class was coopted into the system. They were rewarded with British declaration- Order of the British Empire (OBE), Member of the British Empire (MBE) or even, occasionally, knighthoods. In other words, members of the middle class were

used as instruments of British Policy. [31]

The British government exerted considerable pressure on colonials for conformation to the tenets of imperial domination. Genuine representatives of the popular cause were rigorously excluded from the honours which were granted, or entry into the Executive Council. [32] For example, the application of P.N. Browne for the title of 'K.C'- a title to which he dearly aspired-was repeatedly rejected because he was too closely identified with popular politics. [33] It should be stressed also, that the middle class representatives who occupied the legislature before 1901 made significant compromises with the planters on fundamental working peoples' issues. As early as 1894, compromises were made in relation the importation of East Indian workers, [34] an issue which had been strongly and consistently opposed by the popular movement until the abolition of the system in 1917.

Under these conditions, most of the decisions that were made in the local legislature, were in the interest of the planters and their allies. However, with the passage of time, a series of events-local and international- emerged and had the effect of stimulating working peoples' agitation and even compelled the middle class to take a more progressive view of the conditions within the colony- if only in a bid to protect their own interests.

One such event was manifest in the final quarter of the nineteenth century when the sugar economy went into a deep and almost chronic recession. [35] Because of the total dominance of sugar, the economic fortunes of this crop were crucial to

the well-being of the entire population of the colony. The small farmers were in decline. The independent creole community was systematically dislodged from its *huckstering* activities.

[36] The labour force was contracted while the wage rates were considerably reduced. The Portuguese commercial sector, embryonic in form, was also ailing in the wake of the recession in the dominant sugar economy. All sectors clamoured for relief and they all sought amelioration through political action. By the 1880s, the need for constitutional reform of a profound nature was admitted by the Colonial Office, its local chief servant, Governor Henry T. Irving and the planter oligarchy. [36]

In spite of this, the Colonial Office was able to delay the change until 1891 when a limited reform was made. [37] The Colonial Office, the Governor, and the planter body were able to get away with this *volte face* because, although there was much agitation among the masses at the extra-parliamentary forums, they did not constitute a forceful pressure group to effect meaningful changes from the ranks of the working people. Once again, the middle class, the domestic capitalist element in their ranks were only interested in achieving privileges similar to those enjoyed by foreign capital. [38] The other section, the black and coloured intelligentsia-members of this group dominated the professions-wanted recognition for themselves but, at the same time, were suspicious of similar demands by the working people. [39] Neither element craved profound structural changes. It was easy therefore for the Colonial Office to satisfy such demands by offering limited concessions.

Although the reforms [40] that were implemented were

directed towards the strengthening of the Governor's authority and the continuation of preferential treatment for the planter class, there were a number of long term benefits for the working people. A number of changes in the qualifications for the franchise and the withdrawal of open balloting [41] before the 1897 General Elections, helped other interests to exploit the latent flaws in the 1891 constitution. [42]

It should be noted however, that in the short run, the 1891 Constitution had no significant impact upon popular representation. According to Shahabuddeen, " the constitutional system still rested on a narrow popular basis." [43] The country was described as " politically precocious [44] but educationally backward "and consisting" of a congeries of races from all parts of the world, with different instincts, different standards, and different interests. " [45] The view of the Colonial Office was that the great majority of the population, if qualified, were either too ignorant or too indifferent to exercise their political rights, or, as in the case of most East Indians and Amerindians, simply not qualified to vote by reason of their inability to satisfy the required literacy test. [46] The constitution did not provide the mechanism for anyone to be nominated to represent the unfranchised majority. The British government claimed that it would be in the interest of this section of the population for the Governor to be their official representative in pursuance of the concept of 'imperial trusteeship.' This role of the Governor obviously did not get the approval of the people. One coloured elected member disdainfully rejected the notion of trusteeship with the remark:

" That is such a fallacy that I would most respectfully issue a warning that that view should not continue." [47]

The success at the 1897 general election [48] had the impact of inspiring the coloured and the black elements to improve their performance at subsequent elections. Their politics became more radical, more flamboyant and better organised. The report of the Royal Commission of 1897 gave added impetus to those opposed to sugar when it virtually certified the death of the sugar industry and demanded recognition of other forms of economic activity. [49] Further, the issue of race, never far below the surface, emerged as a critical factor in future election campaigns. [50] Finally, there emerged in the society a deeper consciousness which was manifested in intense working people's militancy and protests. [51] The 1924 Ruimveldt Workers' Incident emerged out of these developments.

The progressive posture of the working people was recognised by the middle class politicians and they took the opportunity to exploit this platform. This encouraged those blacks and coloured recently admitted to the franchise to stand more solidly with the black and coloured causes. The result was increased electoral gains for these politicians and the corresponding marginalisation of white representation in the legislature. [52]

This displacement of the white element is critical to an understanding of what was to take place in the 1920s. The events of this period were the long-term consequences of the 1891 constitution. They were reinforced by further liberalisation in 1904. [53] This development was important since the bulk of the newly enfranchised came from the coloured and black community.

There was also a significant presence of second generation East Indians. This class of voters had its own concerns, grievances and ambitions. That these did not coincide with those of the white oligarchy was apparent. [54]

This divergence produced a shift in electoral issues which tended to radicalise the political process. The oligarchy complained that the process had been regularised, a factor which contributed to their systematic withdrawal from active political participation. [55]

The reasons for this reluctance on the part of members of the European community to seek election is significant. Chiefly they realised that in any event they could no longer hope to dominate the elected side of the legislature. For while it was still possible for them to be elected even though the electorate was predominantly African, [56] they could only be elected through the favour of that electorate, and as the 1926 elections showed, they could, at its will be substantially eliminated from the House. Consequently, in order to secure election they were obliged to put forward and later implement policies closer to those of the representatives of the working people than those of the plantocracy. Many of them, inhibited by old habits, were reluctant to pursue their own policies under these conditions.

The fact that the new majority comprised of blacks and coloureds frightened the plantocracy, the commercial class and the Colonial Office. All were still convinced that sugar should be given preferential treatment and became perturbed on those occasions when the Combined Court failed to give its support to this position. This is not to suggest that the Combined Court was

unaware of the importance of sugar in so far as the economic welfare of the colony was concerned. Nor is it to suggest that they were, as a group, uniformly opposed to protection for sugar in the Combined Court. The crux was that they were not prepared to offer uncritical support and protection to sugar exclusive of all other economic and social interests. In a real sense, while sugar remained important, it was no longer perceived as the only important economy in the colony. Henceforth it would have to share its importance with other sectors of the colonial economy. [57] Planters in the legislature were in effect prisoners of the predominantly African electorate. In other words, though they could be elected and did have a voice in the House, their particular interest had lost effective representation in the legislature. [58]

The planters response was to seek to mould governmental policy at the colonial level in their favour through nominated membership of the Executive Council and to use their influence in London through the 'Planters Lobby' and other groups with vested interests in the Caribbean region, to try and influence and even apply pressure on the imperial government to secure attention to their views and wishes. Influence of this nature contributed in a significant way to the suspension of Guiana's constitution in 1928. [59]

The Role of Race and the British Culture in the Colonial State

This lobby by the planters coincided with a growing conviction on the part of the Colonial Office and the British government in general, that members of the local population were

unfit to govern themselves. By the end of the nineteenth century, Whitehall had all but decided on a fresh exercise in general constitutional retrogression for the non-white colonies. [60] It is instructive that, during the period, the British Dominions of Canada, Australia, Newfoundland and New Zealand were moving with official blessing, towards greater self-government. [61]

The notion of race and the perceived superiority of British culture were at the very core of British colonial rule. This position was aptly brought out by Lord Durham in his '*Report on the Affairs of British North America,*' (Canada) [62] on the question of responsible government for Canada. He noted that the colony " should be left to govern itself on the lines on which representative and responsible government is understood and carried on in the United Kingdom. " [63] Such a system of government was recommended for Canada, since the colony, to a large extent was " Anglicized...and...already enjoyed representative institutions. " [64] However, he was quick to note the " Hopeless inferiority of the French Canadian race " and expressed the view that " The French nationality is destitute of invigorating qualities. " [65] In the light of these factors and for the good of Canada and the British culture, he advised that:

The French Canadians should be merged in an English nationality because they would thereby become an integral part of a greater community, and have a goodlier (sic) heritage. " It is to elevate them from that inferiority that I desire to give to the Canadians our English character." [66]

It was out of this kind of social and official milieu that the leading white planter, Davson, in November 1897, petitioned the Colonial Office to abolish the Guiana constitution on the

grounds, he claimed, that the franchise was being exercised by the " black population " whose votes were " filling the legislature with native barristers who have no stake whatsoever in the colony. " [67] In March 1908 he declared [68] in the Royal Colonial Institute: [69]

I do not believe that in any colony of the Empire the white element should be subject to the coloured, whether it be black, brown or yellow-African, East Indian or Mongolian. For it may be blacks today who rule the land, it may be the East Indian tomorrow, it may-who knows ? - be the Japanese in the future. The officials, the representatives of imperial rule, should have a permanent majority in the Court. [70]

In essence, in the British Empire, broadly speaking, the sphere of settlement is distinct from the sphere of rule. According to Bell, the British Empire included in wholly different areas colonies which were not really dependencies, and dependencies which were not really colonies. [71] In all of this, one can note the almost uncompromising rejection of everything but race as the determinant of fitness to rule. This was manifested in almost every aspect of colonial rule. For example, applications for colonial appointments were frequently forwarded by the Governor to London with a statement of the applicant's race. [72] None but pure European could hold commission in the British Army and Navy. [73]

Often evidence of beliefs in superiority/inferiority and even racial stereo-typing, which surfaced in colonial correspondence, were not questioned by the Colonial Office. Such beliefs so permeated the consciousness of colonial officials that they could not operate outside the assumptions upon which such beliefs were based. [74] Although some individuals were obviously

more prejudicial than others, most of the officials who served in the region, exercised some degree of bias in matters regarding race.

The circumstances surrounding the appointment of Mr. Hector Josephs, a black Jamaican, as Attorney-General of Guiana [75] is a revealing case. The Governor, Sir Graeme Thomson was a man of strong prejudice, hostile to all " men of colour, " a fact which was acknowledged by the officials of the West Indian Department of the Colonial Office. [76] Sir Graeme wanted the new Attorney-General to be a man " of pure European origin. " The reason he gave was because so much power in Guiana resided in the hands of coloured lawyers and that; therefore, the Attorney-General must be a " man of strength of character and moral courage. " [77] The Governor clearly stressed the point that exceptional qualities are required of the Attorney-General to combat the influence the coloured lawyers exercised in the legislature. He did not feel that such qualities could be found in a black man.

It is also important to note that the Governor argued that Josephs would not be accepted socially by the European community in a manner to which his position would entitle him, an attitude which effort on his part failed to modify. Such attitude was sure to prevent Josephs from acquiring that local knowledge which a man in his position should possess. [78] The Governor's position was also supported by Sir Joseph Nunan-the retiring Attorney-General. According to Nunan, Josephs was not up to the job and his appointment would not be welcomed. [79]

In a despatch to the Colonial Office, Governor Thomson strongly supported the candidature of Mr. W.J. Gilchrist,

Stipendiary Magistrate and 'one time' Acting Attorney-General of Guiana. [80] Thomson despatched the following minute: " While I cannot say that I regard him as an officer of outstanding ability...I am satisfied that he is capable of filling the post adequately. " [81]

On this occasion, the Colonial Office opposed Governor Thomson. The Secretary of State insisted that Josephs be appointed. While, on the surface, this action can be interpreted as an indication of a lack of prejudice on the part of the men in London, closer examination revealed that the move was motivated by less progressive considerations. [82] The reasons presented was that Josephs was a man of outstanding ability, exceptional moral character, was personally known to and approved by the Secretary of State and the previous Governor, Rodwell, and that apart from an accident of birth, he was to all intents and purposes a white man. It was also argued that such a move was good for race relations, not only in Guiana but throughout the Empire, if it could be demonstrated that a career in the Colonial Service was open to men of talent, irrespective of colour. [83]

The objective of mitigating racial tension was useful and relevant given the nature of race relations and the growing consciousness of the working people. However, it is unfortunate that the Colonial Office did not see it worthwhile to institute a policy to ensure appointments along lines of merit and ability instead of on colour and orientation. The gesture by the Secretary of State to appoint Josephs was nothing but a *token* appointment of a black man instead of a policy statement.

What is important in this case also is: (i) a black man had

to be quite outstanding to merit appointment to high office—the ordinary competence which would see routine promotion for white officials was not enough for the black applicant, and (ii) a black man had to be 'culturally white' to win approval. [84] In a minute, a senior Colonial Office official writes in support of Josephs: " So far as colour is concerned he is like '*Gunga Din*' white all through, and this being so he would never let local associations interfere with his public duty. " [85]

The notion of the inability of certain groups to take a leading role in the administration of this country, was given such prominence in British colonial policy that Whitehall consistently advocated trusteeship and the need for the Crown, through the Governor, to protect the 'unsuspecting' masses from ambitious 'agitators.' [86] The idea of imperial devolution and an institution for devolution existed, but only for certain regions of the Empire. [87]

The idea that tribal African 'states' could ever evolve into Dominions was unthinkable. The same was true of those tiny bits and pieces, the islands and rocks accumulated for strategic reasons...in Asia or the Americas. [88]

A series of developments in the late 19th and early 20th centuries resulted in the heightened consciousness of the working people in relation to the retrogressive nature of the policies pursued by the mother country. Although these developments were significant in determining the nature of popular political demands and working people's organisation in the Caribbean and other parts of the British Empire, these currents were largely misinterpreted or ignored by the colonial authorities. This was an identifiable feature of the colonial state.

The officials and many of the individuals who claimed to represent the people, were often out of touch with working people's development and aspirations. This was partly due to the fact that the majority of the population was socially removed from the ruling class. [89] In addition, the objectives and interests of these sections of the community were largely dissimilar. For the most part, there was no avenue-constitutionally or through social channels- for dialogue and compromise. Given this situation, the state of the working people was often misinterpreted by the authorities, through a lack of knowledge.

The only exception to this attitude of contemptuous dismissal is seen in moments when the workers expressed overtly their dissatisfaction over acts of exploitation and the denial of fundamental human rights or when popular leaders from within- or outside of-their ranks emerged to challenge the *status quo* or to articulate working people's demands. [90] Often these leaders were branded 'instigators' and 'opportunists' by the colonial authorities.

Through the call to military service and the regular movement of Guianese and other citizens of the region to the metropolis, many working people came into direct contact with the mother country and Europe. Exposure to new standards and possibilities created an anticipation of future gains beyond the parochial desires of the past. Such exposure also served to highlight much of the double standards and inconsistencies which existed between colonial standards and metropolitan reality.

One of the most attractive prospects was the possibility of

acquiring a Western education; for idealistic as well as pragmatic considerations, the colonial policy emphasised and even encouraged selected individuals from the colonies to pursue studies in the mother country. [91] The newly educated men and women not only helped to administer the colonial and commercial institutions but were also equipped to criticise their shortcomings [92] using some of the criteria established in the European community. Often it was those individuals who were exposed to the highest level of education and training in their chosen professions, who were the ones to lead the movement for the commencement of devolution. [93] In this regard, it was made clear to the colonial subjects that their rights as citizens were being denied. The obvious and fundamental right of the people was overlooked and, in cases, even ignored. Having benefited from the impact of British imposed law and order, British sponsored education, British standards and most of all, British ideals, they wanted no more than justice [94] and democracy. In this quest, many found out however, that the rule of law for Britain, did not always apply 'to the letter' in the colonies.

Protests and popular demonstrations which were the result of the working people's desire to effect acceptable changes, were often dismissed as the work of opportunists and instigators who were after personal gains. During the period after the First European War, throughout the British Empire, an increasing number of articulate and dedicated men did not subscribe to the rule of law and order maintained all too often by British bayonets. Many of these individuals wanted to see some positive move towards the achievement of self-government. In the case of Guiana, the

reaction of the British government to this movement was calculated to establish greater control from the metropolitan centre. Thomas informs us that the " Colonial Office tended to reverse the direction of constitutional advance if the struggle intensified or became too violent." [95] This retrogressive trend in British colonial policy was manifested in 1928 and again in 1953. [96]

The attitude of the mother country and many colonial officials towards the suitability of the people in the colonies to govern themselves, was also reflected in labour organisation and intra-group relations. Planters and other employers, because of their influence with the local legislature, were able to experiment (often with public funds) with various labour regimes in their quest for the most economical. Often the welfare of the workers were overlooked in these ventures.

Labour Regimes and Race Relations

The activities and interaction of the working peoples of Guiana must be analysed within the context of the Global system of the movement of labourers. With the exception of the 'First People,' all other sections of the working people within the country arrived under a system in which " living labour power has been transferred in large quantities and over long distances since the end of the fifteenth century." [97] Labourers were moved around in this way in response to a series of developments.

The method by which foreign labour has been incorporated into the world market for labour power, can be traced from the enslavement of the 'First People' and 'Indian forced labour,' through African enslavement and 'coolieism,' to colonial forced

and migrant labour and finally, labour migration and brain drain as manifested in more recent years. [98] This labour market is peculiar because the movement of these workers, for the most part was not determined by supply and demand. On the contrary, the bulk of the workers were taken against their will or misled into a voluntary migration through promises which failed to materialise in the host societies. Potts writes of this market:

Labour power was indeed bought and sold on this market from very early on and traded as a commodity but since the owners did not offer their labour power on a labour market formed in the usual way, physical compulsion was employed to press-gang them into working. [99]

Although different labels were given to these labour regimes from one era to the next-slavery, immigrant labour among others, certain common features persisted-a high level of exploitation of the worker and the need for the employment of force. Each system retained some of the essential elements of the one it succeeded.

Throughout, the European nations vied for supremacy and control of the world market for labour. The struggle for dominance was also manifest between the metropolis and its investors in the colonies. This was seen in the short-term interest of private capital and the long-term projections of the state. Such a situation resulted in the European colonial nations, at least in the early stages of colonisation, taking direct measures to regulate the nature and scale of the recruitment of labour power in colonial territories. [100]

These measures took the form of a series of protective laws and specially appointed officials to oversee recruitment, working

and living conditions and other aspects of life of the migrant. For example, there was the *Black Code* in the British colonies and the USA and the *Code Noir* in the French colonies. As early as the sixteenth century, the first public office to look into the welfare of exploitable labour was created. In the Spanish America, the holder of this office was known as the *protectores y defensores de indios*; [101] during the period of African enslavement the holder was known as the 'protector of slaves' and under coolieism as the 'protectors of emigrants' in India and the 'protector of immigrants' in the host country. [102]

In Guiana, the 'protector of immigrants' was eventually given the title of 'Immigration Agent General.' Although much of the recruiting was handled by private capitalists, the metropolitan governments' role in the general organisation was obvious. On the one hand this intervention was prompted by the desire to safeguard the long-term supply of labour power. On the other hand, these endeavours necessitated countering the most extreme forms of the over-exploitation to which workers under these unfree systems of labour were exposed. [103]

Though the development of the world market for labour power is and has been determined by the economic interests of the metropole and its technical potential, the exploited workers were always aware of their exploitation and always reacted in an active and sometimes revolutionary way to their oppression. Beginning with the firm stance of the 'First People' against the guns, blood hounds and disease of the Spanish intruders-as Sheridan points out: " Not only were the Europeans accompanied to the New World by invisible microparasites, but these

conquerors and colonists were themselves macroparasites."

[104] The working people of the Caribbean and other parts of the Americas, launched a systematic attack on the objects of their exploitation. In an attempt to foil these attacks on the system, employers often resort to create divisions among the working people.

In this process, the issue of race and ethnicity played a prominent role. In Guiana the manipulation of the racial sections of the population became so entrenched that it was widely adopted as a political weapon. The history of race as a political factor in the country began with the plantation economy. It was fostered by planters' need to import and control workers of the various races and cultures who formed the greater portion of the Guianese society. An associated factor is the development of racial stereotypes [105] (derived from planters) among these subject people, and the resulting racial and class antagonism which arose from this plantation society.

The economic category of the ruling class often manifested itself in racial and cultural terms as the society evolved. African enslavement was begun primarily but not exclusively for economic reasons, but it quickly became synonymous with the total oppression of Africans as a race. The convergence of race and class was unaltered by the legal termination of chattel slavery in 1838. For decades after *emancipation*, Africans became the exploited majority and their consciousness was often expressed in racial terms. [106] Other subject groups were victims of the same form of discrimination, although to varying degrees.

Racial perception was further strengthened by the tendency

of Africans and East Indians to identify strongly with events in Africa and India, as well as with outstanding Africans and East Indians abroad. International organisations and cultural currents emphasised this identification. [107]

In their struggle against the plantation capitalists, African and East Indian workers often came into conflict. Part of the reason for this conflict resulted from Africans' resentment at the introduction of indentured Indian competitive labour as well as by their sense of grievance when land was made available for Indian subsistence farming-sometimes after being seized from African farmers. [108]

This approach by the creole [109] working people to immigration was self-interested but they were not selfish. Objectively the African wage earners were engaged in a level of struggle which was higher than that of the other labourers on the estate. Free workers were fighting against the backward looking tendency of landed capital to extract surplus through legal coercion reminiscent of feudalism. Consequently, the opposition to immigration was entirely compatible with espousing a more rational political economy. [110]

It is therefore, under these circumstances that conflict among members of the East Indian and African racial sections should be evaluated. The contradiction among the workers emerged from the inability of the colonial capitalist economy to satisfy the demands of the majority of the producers. When outsiders are introduced into any situation to modify the terms of labour to the disadvantage of local labour, there are clashes between the local and the strangers-including 'strangers' from a few miles

away. [111] " While Africans were having their conflicts with Indians in Guiana, one learns that in England, Ipsden men were attacking harvesters brought in from Woodstock and Hardmead, farmhands were assaulting replacements brought in from Chicheley." [112]

A number of scholars have, in their attempt to reconstruct this aspect of the nation's history, employed the framework of a 'plural society' model. A plural society is one in which two or more distinct groups of appreciable size dwell within the same political unit. The basis for distinction may be race, religion, language or any other aspect of culture deemed significant by the plural society's constituent groups. Usually, one of the constituent groups dominates the political unit by a monopoly of the government apparatus. Often, such a group is a minority, its position having been acquired by force, it maintains itself principally through coercion and regulation of the other segments and by its manipulation of the economy. [113]

The plural society is characterised by dissensus and the lack of a unitary social will. Each segment of the plural society perceives the others as opponents. Each is conscious only of the divisions within the society to the exclusion of the commonalities. " Few recognise that in fact all the members of all sections have material interests in *common*, but most see that on many points their material interests are opposed." [114] Following upon this, it is only in the market place that the constituent groups interact. All are able to appreciate buying and selling and the pursuit of profit. But because the economic interests of the several segments are not necessarily identical,

conflict may also appear in the market. [115]

The concept of the plural society was first stated by J.S. Furnival in 1939. [116] However, it was not until the late fifties and early sixties that attempts were made to reconstitute the concept of pluralism into a systematic theory. Through his writing and research, M.G. Smith emerged as one of the leading proponents of the model. [117]

In relation to the developments in Guiana, this theory has a number of limitations. For example pluralism might adequately explain class functions when the race or culture group in question is virtually a class in itself -a stage which was not attained by the working people. That is to say the concept offers no major operational problems when all Africans or Indians in the society were exploited through the sale of labour or peasant produce. [118]

A significant aspect of this stratification was the emergence of the middle class, (which comprised both Indian and African professionals) the first indigenous group to become '*successful*' in the colonial political economy. That success was defined and dictated by the needs of colonial capitalism and not those of the Guianese people. The predominance of capitalism had important consequences for the nature and behaviour of this class. It's acceptance of the values of the dominant British culture was a major cause of ideological vacillation and periodic defections which became features of the political behaviour of this class. [119] Further, the presence of the Portuguese in Guiana as specialists commercial intermediaries should be seen as a further contribution to the emergence of privileged and

exploitative strata and classes within the framework of the exploited subject race. [120]

Another limitation of the pluralist thesis is in its conceptualisation of society essentially in terms of the form or function of its institutional system without focusing on social action either between or within cultural sections. [121] Similarly, the thesis is restricted to the identification of institutional differences in a society which marks it as plural at a given time without explaining the (*historical*) process of acculturation by which differences among the cultural sections might be reduced. [122]

This process of integration or '*creolization*' involves two major processes: firstly, the creation of some area of common culture corresponding to the social relations in which people of varying ethnic groups are involved; secondly, the stressing of differences between the groups identified as 'racial' sections. " Thus creole culture, while encouraging some level of common cultural participation, also emphasized cultural differences and resulted in the participation of socially exclusive groups at every level of society." [123] These aspects of ethnic relations in Guiana during the early decades of the twentieth century, are examined in the next chapter.

The Nature of Economic Development Within the Colonial State

In Guiana the first priority of the colonial state was the maintenance of a rigid monopoly of land, labour and capital in order to retain the dominance of the ruling class. Land was alienated from the people from the very beginning of colonisation

and kept under tight control of the planter oligarchy through the highly restrictive ' Crown Land Regulation.' These regulation codified the dispossession of the Amerindians (the first People of Guiana) the true owners of the land, and ensured that other sections of the dominated people did not have access to plots of land large enough to sustain production for their development independent of the plantation.

The crown land regulation which was implemented in Guiana had its foundation in the old English system of land tenure which involved the making of free grants. [124] The lands of the colonies were regarded as the sole preserves of the colonisers. Lord Durham, described the 'waste' of the empire as " the rightful patrimony of the English people, the ample appanage which God and nature have set aside in the New World for those whose lot has assigned them but insufficient portion of the old." [125] Under the influence of Gibbon Wakefield, a new policy was introduced in the 1830s under which crown lands were sold at comparatively high prices to purchasers of substance. [126] The main objective of the policy was to frustrate the efforts of the newly emancipated Africans to emerge as successful peasants and, hence, independent of the plantocracy.

The numerous clauses and conditions along with the actual cost, made it difficult for the workers to qualify for such lands. The capitalist, on the other hand, were able to satisfy the financial and other conditions. Often, however, the interests of this class was linked to sugar cane or on businesses that was related to the sugar industry. A significant part of the profits made from those investments was sent back to Europe. Under this

arrangement, a relatively small portion was reinvested in the economy. According to the Crown Land Regulations of 1919, lands for agricultural purposes could be acquired either by lease for a term not exceeding 99 years with right of renewal subject to revision of rent based on the value of the land apart from improvements or by purchase was limited to 10 acres in the first instance. [127] In addition, numerous conditions had to be met by the leasee [128] See chart below:

TABLE I:

THE TABLE SHOWS NECESSARY PAYMENTS FOR THE ACQUISITION OF CROWN LANDS: 1919.

PAYMENTS WERE AS FOLLOWS

Filing fee on Application \$5 (£1.0.10)

SURVEY FEE

10 Acres including Diagram \$7.50
For surveying each acre over 10 Acres

And up to 40 Acres \$0.50
Each acre over 40 Acres and up to

500 Acres \$0.30
Each Acre over 500 Acres and up

To 1,000 Acres \$0.20
Each Acre above 1,000 Acres \$0.10

ANNUAL RENTAL

For area up to 5 Acres \$1.00 (4s 2d)
For each Acre over 5 Acres and up

To 10 Acres \$0.02 (10d)
For each Acre over 100 Acres and up

To 500 Acres \$0.15 (7 1/2d)
For each Acre over 500 Acres \$0.10 (5d)

Source: [NAG] " Memorandum in Regard to the Terms and Conditions on which Crown Lands can be Acquired Under the Crown Lands Regulations 1919.

Faced with these conditions, it was difficult for a successful peasantry to develop in the country. The working people had to depend almost exclusively upon the estate for employment. This was because there were limited opportunities within the mining and other sectors of the economy outside of sugar. Part of the explanation can be found in the nature of economic investment in the colony.

The policy governing the conditions and scale on which Britain had given financial assistance to the colonies changed with time and circumstances. [129] During the early years of effective occupation, initiative for crop production and all other forms of economic activities, fell entirely in the hands of the planters and the local legislature.

From this early period, the plantation units within the colonies were attached to the mercantile structures of Western Europe by links which ensured their growth but also prevented their alteration in terms of the internal needs of the Caribbean society. [130] They produced in response to transatlantic demands and within their respective metropolitan markets, they enjoyed the protection of the differential duties that the metropolitan states normally applied in favour of their own colonies. This advantage, in British colonies, encouraged monopoly prices at home and restrictive productive practices on the estates. [131] The planters depended on the Atlantic trade in Africans- later migrant workers- in an attempt to meet their insatiable hunger for labour and on the British North American colonies to supply them with estate supplies. [132] Unable to generate a surplus sufficient to cover initial capital costs, current expenses and

future expansion, they found themselves, with few exceptions, bound to metropolitan creditors who secured themselves by high rates of interest and liens on ensuring crops. [133] For all these reasons, sugar production demonstrated what has been aptly termed 'an inexorable tenacity;' [134] "once a mill and boiling house had been established, the land bought and planted to cane, ... there was no breaking the grip of sugar or go up in ruinate." [135]

The system was plagued with a number of weaknesses-over-dependence on European financing and marketing arrangements being a major set back to independent development. Further, British West Indian planters had come to depend increasingly on the artificially high price structure of a protected home market so that "what looked like West Indian prosperity was often no more than West Indian speculation." [136] After 1815 this entire protective mechanism was progressively dismantled in response to the needs of Britain's emergent industrial economy, for which the limited outlets and monopoly prices of the old mercantile empire were simply inadequate. [137] Wider and more competitive markets were sought by the new breed of industrialists who emerged in the major British cities.

The legal termination of enslavement and the switch to a system of free trade were major developments in this transformation and they contributed, along with the internal shortcomings mentioned above, to a general crisis of the sugar industry and by extension, the West Indian society. Under these conditions, the planters were hard-pressed to keep sugar production viable. They were reluctant and, in many cases, unable

to invest in other economic ventures.

During the early years of this century, the British government held the view that the colonies should be encouraged to 'pay their own way,' on the grounds that external financial assistance would lead to pauperisation and delay the advance to full political responsibility. [138] Nor, in accordance with popular economic principles of the period, did the British government consider it a responsibility to plan and guide economic development in the colonies. [139]

The development of public infrastructure in the colonies was facilitated by the improved terms of colonial loans made possible by the COLONIAL STOCK ACTS. [140] passed at the end of the nineteenth century. Economic development, however, was still regarded as the proper function primarily of private enterprise, operating within the framework of law and order provided by the local government. [141]

In all of this, the British government did accept responsibility for coming to the aid of any colony when it ran into serious financial difficulties. It should be noted though, that it was the British authorities who determined at what point intervention was necessary and the extent of such intervention. These decisions were outside the jurisdiction of the colonial authorities.

Assistance was given through a system of Grant-in-aid of Administration, the use of which was controlled by the British Treasury. [142] Grants or loans were also made for various special purposes and to institutions concerned with improving conditions of life for colonial peoples.

The chief aim of colonial policy until the first European War was not the improvement of colonial welfare and prosperity but the maintenance of law and order so that trading companies might pursue, without interruption, their business of securing a steady flow of raw materials to the wealthy industrial countries. [143] Perham noted:

British colonial administrators reflecting and indeed prolonging the attitude of their kin in Britain, lavished their attention upon political development, while the more powerful economic forces were allowed their free and devastating attack upon native society. [144]

Significantly, after the 1914/18 war, ideas about what should be the place of government in the economic life of the colonies changed: it began to be accepted that government intervention was necessary on a larger scale than hitherto. [145] This attitude became even more widespread as a consequence of the economic depression brought on by the war conditions. It was clear to the British government that colonial recovery would not have been possible without meaningful assistance and co-operation from Europe. In addition, the prosperity of the colonies was crucial in aiding the war recovery programme of the mother country. Efficient production of raw materials had to be maintained to satisfy the ever increasing metropolitan demand. Although sums of money were made available to Guiana through the '*Colonial Development and Welfare Act*' [146] little of significance was achieved in relation to economic prosperity.

The Colonial Office policy of promoting the self-sufficiency of each colony through the generation of local revenue, gave rise to the introduction of a series of taxes levied on various goods

and economic activities. In these tax regimes, it was the working people who bore the full weight of their implementation. In Guiana, the struggle against unfair taxation along with other acts of an unprogressive planter dominated colonial administration, occupied a major part of the working people's struggle for much of the country's colonial past.

Apart from the factors examined so far, most of which are connected to conditions within the colony, British colonial activities in Guiana were also influenced by factors which prevailed at the international level. These included the nature of international trade and strategic and ideological issues.

Trade and the 'Informal' Empire: Strategic and Ideological Considerations

Trade and in particular, the internationalisation of trade, played an important role in securing the gains of the 'informal' [147] aspect of colonial expansion. Rodney informs us that " The first significant thing about the internationalisation of trade in the fifteenth century was that Europeans took the initiative and went to other parts of the world. " [148] What was termed international trade was simply the extension of European interests overseas. The strategy behind international trade and the production that supported it was firmly in the hands of the maritime nations from the North Sea to the Mediterranean. [149] It should be noted that for a significant period during the process of colonial expansion, Britain emerged as one of the foremost nations of the world, dominating much of the sea routes of the major oceans and seas.

The growth of industry and technological advancement in

Europe, placed the imperial powers in a favourable position for the sale of goods in appropriate quantities, which the colonials were convinced they should purchase. Although the relationship between the colony and the mother country was of the nature in which one complemented the other, [150] the colonial powers gave the impression that they were performing a service for the colonies which could be withdrawn if it is deemed appropriate or necessary. In addition, the metropolis always grasped at the opportunity to assert its dominant role in this relationship.

It had been seen that in many instances where the metropolis has been able to establish relatively strong and stable political control over colonies, the tendency was a relaxation of imperialist control. " It may be suggested that this willingness to limit the use of paramount power to establishing security for trade is the distinctive feature of British imperialism of free trade in the nineteenth century, in contrast to the mercantilist use of power to obtain commercial supremacy and monopoly through political possession. " [151] The mercantilist approach to colonial development reached the height of its popularity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. [152] Under this system, goods consigned to the colonies were almost entirely transported by carriers of the respective mother countries under what was termed the '*Navigation Provision.*' [153]

The gradual shift towards 'Free Trade' (see above) is also another 'adjustment' in keeping with the economic changes and industrial demands in Britain. The effect of this 'adjustment' on the colonies was given scant consideration, if any at all. In order to defend the lifeline of British trade and empire, the

tropical colonies were sacrificed as pawns in the game of metropolitan rivalry. [154] It should be noted that the control of transportation and distribution systems is a principal weapon of oligarchic competition of multinational corporations. [155]

A major consideration of Britain was to create favourable overseas markets and a reliable source of raw materials to promote its domestic industrial development. Imperialism can be considered as exerting a political function in the process of integrating new regions into the expanding economy; its character is largely decided by the various and changing relationships between the political and economic elements of expansion in any particular region and time. [156] However, it should be noted that, imperialism and economic integration need not go hand in hand. Imperialism may be only indirectly connected to economic integration in that it sometimes extends beyond areas of economic development, but acts for their strategic protection. Secondly, although imperialism is a function of economic expansion, it is not a necessary function. [157] In many cases, it is only when the politics of those new regions fail to provide satisfactory conditions for commercial activities, and when their relative weakness allows, that power is used imperialistically to adjust these conditions in favour of the metropolis. [158]

Whether the strategy is 'formal' or 'informal,' the general objective of British imperialism was to convert these new areas into complementary satellite economies [159] or hinterlands. The nature of the political connection between Britain and the dependencies, varied from one colony to the other. Among the

factors which are crucial to both the formal and informal approach were: the economic importance of the territory; the strength of its political structure; the readiness of its rulers to collaborate with Britain for commercial or strategic purpose; the nature of European rivalry and *the ability of the native society to undergo economic change without external control.*

[160] The decision on the suitability of colonies or economic units to pursue with their own government with little intervention from Britain was largely dictated by the racial orientation of the people who inhabited these units. Recognition of responsibility was indicated by a slackening in active intervention and eventually, the granting of total self-government. However, " ...in Latin America, British governments...intervened when necessary to protect British interests in the more backward states... " [161]

Guiana can be grouped among the units where the degree of direct intervention varied with time and circumstances. The colony was acquired along with a number of Spanish and French possessions during the Napoleonic wars. [162] The entry of Guiana as a member of the British Empire, coincided with a period when the growth in British industries made new demands upon the metropole's overall colonial policy. " It necessitated linking underdeveloped areas with British foreign trade and, in so doing, moved the political arm to force an entry into markets closed by the power of foreign monopolies. " [163] Guiana, with its vast expanse of fertile land and numerous deposits of minerals, was in an ideal position to assist in Britain's industrial thrust.

The early period of British control of the colony was

characterised by resource exploration and exploitation. The planters had relative freedom to carry on the business of government, using structures that were in place, before the advent of the British. (see example of the Dutch system of administration above) Under British rule, this early period of colonisation fell under the general design created for the Caribbean region. Such approach was not unique in the region or in other parts of the Empire. The practice of creating a central administration for several colonial units, had the advantage of limiting the administrative costs and also the amount of metropolitan officials needed to manage the Colonial Civil Service. [164]

However, over time and changing circumstances, a number of adjustments were made to the methods employed in colonial administration in Guiana. For example the period between the two European Wars, witnessed closer control over the affairs of the colony. This was mainly due to the strategic importance of Guiana and other territories of the region, to the mother country's military programme, along with the activities of the USA in the region. From a military perspective, the Caribbean region was ideally located to facilitate the monitoring and interception of enemy warships and submarines in the South Atlantic and those attempting to reach the Pacific Ocean via the Falkland Islands and Cape Horn around the southern most point of South America.

Military installations were erected in Guiana, Jamaica and some of the larger territories of the region. [165] In addition, known deposits of resources such as petroleum and pitch in

Trinidad and bauxite in Guiana and Jamaica had to be safeguarded and channeled into the British war effort. [166] A series of agricultural products such as limes, lemons and Sea Island cotton (mainly from Montserrat) constituted significant items among the military supplies. [167] In the light of these developments, steps were taken to ensure closer monitoring of the colonies.

In keeping with its policy of intervention, the British government implemented widespread constitutional changes in Guiana during 1928 because it was perceived that the English culture was under threat of being overwhelmed by a native version. An attempt was made to justify the move when the Colonial Office expressed its concern over the ability of the appointed representatives of the majority to adequately represent them. [168] The Governor, the Crown's representative, had to be assigned additional power in order to 'safeguard the lot of the working people.' [169]

Again, in 1953, the British government saw it fit to disrupt the constitutional development in Guiana. In that year, the People's Progressive Party (PPP) led by Dr. Cheddi Jagan, gained an overwhelming victory at the general elections held under adult suffrage. However, after one hundred and thirty three days in office, the constitution was suspended in a grand show of military manoeuvre. [170]

On this occasion, the British government sent troops into the country and deployed military planes and warships in the area. [171] It was alleged that the state of emergency which was declared in the country was to foil a plot by the Jagan government to transform Guiana into a communist state. [172] The

famous '*Red Threat*' created much uproar in Britain while many Guianese were unaware of such a 'threat,' until British troops arrived in the streets of Georgetown, asking for directions to the source of the fighting. [173]

These claims were strongly rejected by the leaders of the PPP government. Jagan (the party Chairman) and L.F.S. Burnham (Minister and senior member of the party) took the added precaution to journey to London, at considerable financial costs and inconvenience, to explain their case before the British Parliament and the British public. [174] Jagan stressed that the British authorities built up their case on "...suppositions and distortions of facts. " [175]

The suspension of the country's constitution in 1928 and 1953 is consistent with the way Britain has dealt with her colonies, especially those with a non-white majority. When the situation is 'normal' the attitude of the metropolis is one characterised by scant regard. Sometimes the colonies were portrayed as creating excessive financial and other burden on the government and people of the mother country.

On the other hand, whenever there was a threat, real or perceived, to British strategic interests, English culture or British sovereignty, the response is often quick and decisive. Seldom, if at all, were the wishes of the people considered or even solicited on significant issues which had long-term implications for their welfare. Always the interests of the British government and that of those in the society who represent those interests, must come before all other interests. Whenever the working people were mentioned, it was usually in the context

of a statement prepared by the British authorities, outlining policies which 'they' decided was in the best interest of the 'ordinary people.'

Responding to this attitude and in a bid to promote their own interests as conceived by members within their ranks, the working people organised and demonstrated. In the process, they effectively carried their case to the public through 'street corner' meetings, and to the government, through their representatives in the legislature. Membership and participation in village and community organisations and the formation of workers' unions were central features of their organisational structures.

Chapter four analyses the conditions under which these 'work groups' and social and benevolent organisations which emerged in the towns and villages evolved, through the initiative of the working people, into large and effective workers' unions. In this process the activities of the church, the media and community leaders combined to provide leadership and direction to the working people's activities.

FOOTNOTES

1. Alan A. Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves: The Political Economy of British Guiana, 1838-1904. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972.) p. 256.
2. D.N. Winch, " *Classical Economics and the Case for Colonization.*" in A.G.L. Shaw (ed.) Great Britain and the Colonies 1815-1866. (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1970.) p. 93.
3. Ibid.
4. Edward Gibbon Wakefield was the leader of the Colonial Reform Movement, see *ibid.*, pp. 94-95.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 101, see also Allyn Young, " *The Theory of International Returns and Economic Progress.*" Economic Journal, Vol. XXXVII (1928) pp. 527-542; J.H. Williams, " *The Theory of International Trade Reconsidered.*" Reprinted in Readings in Theory of International Trade. 1950, pp. 253-71; and Hla Myint, " *The 'Classical Theory' of International Trade and Underdeveloped Countries.*" Economic Journal. Vol. LXVIII (1958) pp. 317-37.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 101-2. Smith's formulation found little favour among the followers of David Ricardo. According to the Ricardians, it conceded too much to the businessman's view of markets as an expansive force and gave comfort to those who argued the need for measures to stimulate the demand for output.
9. R. Robinson, J. Gallagher and A. Denny, Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism. (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1974.) p. 2.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
13. Mohammed Shahabuddeen, Constitutional Development in Guiana 1621-1978. (Georgetown: Guyana Printers Ltd., 1978.) p. 61.
Note: At different periods during the 18th century, the English exercised some jurisdiction over Essequibo and Demerara. See pp. 8-20.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Brian Moore, " *Colonial Politics and the Preservation of Planter Hegemony in British Guiana After Emancipation.*" Paper Presented to the Seventh Conference of Caribbean Historians. University of the West Indies, Mona (Jamaica) 2-8 April 1975.

16. Ibid., also C.O.111/98 Bathurst to D'Urban, July 1825 (copy of the Original Draft.)
17. Ibid., quoted in C.O.111/306: No. 131 Wodehouse to Molesworth 19 September, 1855.
18. See C.O.111/98 Bathurst to D'Urban, July 1825.
19. Ibid., also C.O.111/306 No. 131.
20. See for example Shahabuddeen, Constitutional Development... pp. 461-63.
21. Anthony Trollope, The West Indies and the Spanish Main. (London: 1859.) p. 170.
22. G.W. Des Voeux served as a Stipendiary Magistrate in Guiana. He is famous for his strong condemnation of the system which gave unlimited power to the planters. See his famous letter to Lord Granville in 1869 in C.O.111/378. Des Voeux to Granville, 9 June 1870, also Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves... pp. 115-16.
23. Moore, " Colonial Politics..." also J. Beaumont, The New Slavery. (London: 1871.) p. 8.
24. James G. Rose, " From Oligarchy to Bureaucracy: The Coming of Crown Colony Government to British Guiana in 1928. " Paper Presented at the Twentieth Annual Conference of Caribbean Historians, University of the Virgin Islands, St Thomas, March 27 to April 2, 1988. p. 1.
25. Ibid., also Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves... see chapter v (on the survival of the sugar industry.)
26. Ibid.
27. For a significant part of the nineteenth century, the British government failed to develop clear policies to regulate and guide the conduct of specific activities of the people within the Caribbean territories. This gave the planters greater opportunity to implement policies to promote their own interests.
28. Rose, " From Oligarchy to Bureaucracy..." also Moore, " Colonial Politics..."
29. Ibid., also Sir Cecil Clementi, A Constitutional History of British Guiana. (London: Macmillan, 1937.) pp. 142-146.
30. Reynold Burrowes, The Wild Coast: An Account of Politics in Guiana. (Cambridge MA: Schenkman Publishing Company, Inc., 1984.) p. 7.
31. Ibid.

32. K. Nehusi, " *The Development of Political Organisation and Political Consciousness in British Guiana, 1870-1964: The Conscientizacao of the Middle Class and Masses.*" PhD. Dissertation, University College, London, 1989.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. For a discussion of the impact of this recession, see Walter Rodney, *A History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881-1905.* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1981.) pp. 98-99.
36. Rose, " *From Oligarchy...*" p. 3.
37. Ibid., see Knutsford to Gormanston No. 261, October 14, 1890.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Knutsford to Gormanston, No. 261 October 14, 1890.
41. Shahabuddeen, *Constitutional History...* p. 412. (Secret ballot was introduced in Guiana in 1896.)
42. Gormanston to Knutsford, No. 4, January 3, 1890. The widening of the franchises had the effect of entrenching the representatives of the black and coloured groups in the society. They were placed in a position of dominance over the whites.
43. Shahabuddeen, *Constitutional Development...* p. 410. For example in 1926, out of a total male population of 86, 000, only about 11, 000 were registered as voters. See also 'Report of the British Guiana Commission,' 1927.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., pp. 410-411, also Memorandum of the Elected Members of the Combined Court, 1928, p. 41.
47. E.G. Woolford, Debates of the Combined Court, December 14, 1923.
48. H.A. Will, *Constitutional Change in the British West Indies, 1880-1903.* (Oxford: 1970.) pp. 149 and 158. (The black and coloured sections of the community captured a considerable portion of the elective seats of the Court of Policy and the Combined Court and in effect, upset the previous political balance.) See also J.W. Harper-Smith, " *The Political Development of British Guiana Since 1891.*" Oxford B. Litt. Thesis, 1964, pp. 66, 77 and 80.

49. Rose, "From Oligarchy..." p. 5. Quoted in Great Britain, Report of the West Indian Royal Commission 1897. (London: H.M.S.O., 1897.)
50. Ibid., also Echo 20 January, 1892.
51. Nehusi, "The 1905 Protest in Guyana: Cause, Course and Consequences." Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Guyana, 1981.
52. Rose, "From Oligarchy..." p. 6.
53. Clementi, A Constitutional History... p. 318. (The financial qualification of the franchise was reduced from \$480 to \$300 a year.)
54. Nunan to Egerton July 25, 1925.
55. Daily Argosy August 24, 1916, see Letter to the Editor.
56. H.A. Lutchman, The 1891 Constitutional Change and Representation in the Former British Guiana. A.C.L.C. Political Science Series, 1970. pp. 9-10.
57. Rose, "From Oligarchy..." p. 10.
58. Shahabuddeen, Constitutional Development... p. 413.
59. Under the British Guiana Act, July 13 1928, the Order in Council abolished the old Court of Policy and Combined Court and substituted them for a Legislative Council consisting of the Governor, the Colonial Secretary and the Attorney General as *ex-officio* members, eight nominated official members, five nominated unofficial members and fourteen elected members. The constitution was seen as a retrogressive step and damaging to the progress made towards full representation for the working people. In addition, no discernible benefits had accrued to them as compensation for the loss. See Shahabuddeen, Constitutional Development... pp. 457-463.
60. Ibid., p. 414, also Will, Constitutional Change... pp. 224 and 246.
61. Ann Spackman, Constitutional Development of the West Indies 1922-1968: A Selection from the Major Documents. (Bridgetown: Caribbean University Press, 1975.) p. XXXL (of Preface)
- 62 Sir C.P. Lucas (ed.) Lord Durham's Report on the Affairs of British North America. Vol. 1. (London: Clarendon Press, 1912.)
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid., p. 116.
65. Ibid.

66. Ibid., p. 121.

67. Ibid., p. 416, see for example J.W. Harper-Smith, The Political Development of British Guiana...

68. Reflecting the general thinking of the English Historian J.A. Froude, The English in the West Indies or the Bow of Ulysses 1888. pp. 38, 281 and 282, also the criticism of Froude by J.J. Thomas, Froudacity: West Indian Fables Explained, 1889.

69. E.R. Davson, British Guiana and its Development. Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute, March 24, 1908. pp. 14 and 16.

70. Ibid.

71. J. Bowyer Bell, On Revolt: Strategies of National Liberation. (London: Harvard University Press, 1976.)

72. Shahabuddeen, Constitutional Development... p. 416, also Egerton to Harcourt, Confidential Despatch of March 11, 1914, on the undesirability of having an African doctor attended to white patients.

73. Egerton to Harcourt, February 20, 1915, see Adolph Edwards, Marcus Garvey. 1967. p. 8.

74. This position was brought out in several correspondence between the colonies and the Colonial Office. At the level of the assessment of individual black, the files relating to the appointment of Mr. Hector Josephs, a black Jamaican, as Attorney-General of Guiana, is very revealing. See for example, Ann Spackman, " Official Attitudes and Official Violence: The Ruimveldt Massacre, Guiana, 1924. " Social and Economic Studies. Vol. 22, No. 3, 1973.

75. Ibid.

76. PRO: C.O.111/5749, Thomson to SS, January 14, 1925.

77. PRO: C.O.111/15582, April 3, 1925.

78. Ibid., Thomson to SS.

79. Sir. Joseph Nunan was the retiring Attorney-General. C.O.111/5749 January 14, 1925.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.

82. Spackman, " Official Attitudes..."

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid. (It was clear that the officials strongly supported the claim that only Europeans or individuals who possessed 'European qualities' were temperamentally suited for the job. In a despatch to the Secretary of State, Governor Thomson made the following comment in relation to the appointment of a new Attorney-General: " Should you decide however to select for this appointment an officer outside of the colony, I have the honour to ask that he may be of pure European origin." Quoted in PRO: C.O.111/5749, January 14, 1925.

85. Minute in C.O.111/759, December 11, 1925. (The approval of the Secretary of State was to some extent, based on the claim that Josephs was largely committed to white values. The minute suggested humour or even contempt for the talented Josephs in comparing him with 'Gunga Din', the humble, desperately loyal water boy of imperial legend whose highest ambition was to be a soldier in the British Army.

86. See C.O.111/20598 April 13, 1924, also C.O.111/15755 April 1, 1924; C.O.16102 April 3, 1924; and C.O.111/17119 April 5, 1924.

87. Bell, On Revolt... p. 20.

88. Ibid., p. 21.

89. The plantation society was rigidly divided along lines of colour and wealth, see George Beckford, Persistent Poverty: Underdevelopment in the Plantation Economies of the Third World. (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1972.)

90. At these times, the officials were quick to take firm steps (often military action) to bring an end to these incidents and denounced the leaders as trouble makers.

91. This was a strategy aimed at soliciting support from the local population (usually professionals from the black and coloured groups) to promote European values and to guarantee European domination of every aspect of life in the society.

92. Often however, a number of progressive individuals from the ranks of the working people, used their training and exposure to highlight the contradictions in the colonial policies.

93. Bell, On Revolt... p. 21.

94. Ibid.

95. Ibid.

96. Clive Y. Thomas, The Poor and the Powerless: Economic Policy and Change in the Caribbean. (London: The Latin American Bureau {Research and Action} Limited, 1988.)

97. Lydia Potts, The World Labour Market: A History of Migration. (London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1990.) p. 6.
98. Ibid., p. 7.
99. Ibid.
100. Ibid., pp. 208-209.
101. Ibid., p. 209, quoted in Richard Konetzke, Sud-und Mittelamerika I (Fischer Weltgeschichte vol. 22), Frankfurt and Main, 1965, p. 180.
102. Potts, p. 209, quoted in Hugh Tinker, A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920. (London: 1974.) p. 14.
103. Potts, The World... p. 209.
104. See Alvin O. Thompson, "Amerindian-European Relations in Dutch Guiana." in Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd (eds.) Caribbean Slave Society and Economy: A Reader. (Kingston: [Jamaica] Ian Randle Publishers Limited, 1991.) p. 13.
105. Rodney, A History of... p. 180. (For example the Akan name 'Kwesi' became 'Quasie'-the lazy African. The venerable 'Swamy,' in the West Indies, became 'Sammy'-the childlike, thievish, hardworking, and miserly to the point of selfish neglect-immigrant worker.
106. This position was expressed in the way Africans organised to protect their gains over the years, and their willingness to embrace the Pan-Africanist Movement.
107. See for example Mr. Kunwar Maraj Singh (Indian Colonisation Delegate to Guiana) speech, delivered to the BGEIA, in C.O.111/658 (Extract from Daily Argosy 14 November, 1925.
108. Leslie M. Potter, "Indian and African Guianese Village Settlement Pattern and Inter-Group Relationship, 1871-1921." The History Gazette, University of Guyana, Turkeyen, Georgetown, September, 1992. (Parate execution sales facilitated the concentration of rural property in fewer hands. Simultaneously, it sparked off a transfer from creole Africans as a group into the hands of Indians, Portuguese and Chinese, see also Rodney, A History of... p. 182.
109. The 'creoles' comprised that section of the Guianese community who were born in the country.
110. See for example, Rodney, A History of...
111. Ibid., p. 175.
112. Ibid., p. 185, see also Ralph Samuel (ed.) Village Life and Labour. (London: 1975.) pp. 37-38.

113. The concept of the Plural Society was first stated by J.S. Furnival in 1939. Other scholars such as R.T. Smith, M.G. Smith, H. Hoetinck, Lloyd Braithwaite, Sidney Mintz, H.I. McKenzie and Gordon Lewis, explored and emphasised various aspects of the Plural model, see Brian Moore, Race..., also P.M. Netscher, History of the Colonies, Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice: From the Dutch Establishment to the Present Day. (Gravenhage, 1886.) Translated from the Dutch by W.E. Roth (Georgetown: British Guiana, 1929.) pp. 52-60.
114. Netscher, History of... p. 49.
115. Ibid.
116. See footnote 113, Furnival's model is based upon the economies of Southeast Asia.
117. See Moore, Race... pp. 218-219.
118. Walter Rodney, " *Race and Class in a Colonial Economy: Subject Race and Class Contradiction in Guyanese History.*" Paper Presented at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London, February, 1976.
119. See Nehusi, PhD. Dissertation, p. 100.
120. Rodney, " *Race and Class...*"
121. Moore, Race... pp. 221-222.
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid.
124. Mohammed Shahabuddeen, From Plantocracy to Nationalisation-A Profile of Sugar in Guyana. (Georgetown: Guyana National Printers Ltd., 1983.) p. 229.
- 125 Ibid., also Lucas (ed.) Lord Durham's Report...
126. Ibid., pp. 229-230.
127. For Crown Land Regulations, see " Memorandum in Regard to the Terms and Conditions on Which Crown Lands can be Acquired Under the Crown Lands Regulations 1919." [NAG]
128. Apart from the costs indicated in the chart, there were other conditions which had to be satisfied. For example, one-fifth of the area leased had to be cultivated or otherwise beneficially occupied within two years and at the end of the third year one-fifth of the total area had to be under cultivation. In addition, leases for the cultivation of limes, coconuts, cocoa, cassava and other provisions were obtained only after suitable financial guarantees were given.
129. Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves... p. 7.

130. Ibid., see also J.H. Parry and P.M. Sherlock, A Short History of the West Indies. (New York: 1965.) p. 144.

131. Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves... p. 9, also E.V. Goveia, Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the End of the Eighteenth Century. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965.) p. 21.

132. Ibid., p. 7.

133. Ibid.

134. Ibid.

135. Ibid., quoted in Parry and Sherlock, A Short History... p. 144.

136. Ibid., also Goveia, Slave Society... p. 21.

137. MRC: The Fabian Colonial Bureau, " *Co-operation in the Colonies*." TUC File: MSS 292/930/1. p. 6.

138. Ibid., quoted in Times March 14, 1942 (see article by M. Perham.)

139. MRC: TUC File: " *Co-operation in the Colonies*." MSS 292/930/1.

140. Ibid.

141. Ibid.

142. Ibid.

143. Ibid., quoted in Times March 14, see Perham's article.

144. Ibid.

145. Ibid.

146. Ibid., this Act was passed in 1929 and revised in 1940. See MRC: TUC File: MSS 292/930/2. Note: Even with the amendments, Grant-in-aid for the West Indian territories for the period 1920-1921 and 1949-1950 amounted to £3,640,400. Of this amount, Guiana received £754,627, third highest in value after British Honduras (Belize), £785,000 and Jamaica £1,317,428.

147. J. Gallagher and Robinson, " *The Imperialism of Free Trade*." in A.G.L. Shaw (ed.) Great Britain and the Colonies 1815-1865. pp. 150-151. The manifestation of the 'informal' aspect of empire building and colonialism can be seen in areas of the empire where the British government, at different times, appeared to take little interest in the colonies and the very process of expansion appeared to be conducted in a disorganised manner.

148. Walter Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1992.) p. 85.

149. Ibid.

150. The colonies constituted crucial links in the capitalist system of the metropolitan societies. They provided raw materials and a useful outlet for European goods. (In a number of cases, goods which failed to reach the required European quality specification, were 'passed off' in the colonial markets.)

151. Gallagher and Robinson, "*The Imperialism...*" in Shaw (ed.) Great Britain... p. 149.

152. This system attempted to confine the shipment of goods between the mother country and the colonies in ships belonging to the mother country. The rules governing this form of trading arrangements, were outlined in the '*Navigation Acts*' implemented between 1650 and 1661.

153. Gallagher and Robinson, "*The Imperialism...*" (The Navigation Provision outlined the laws which were made by the mother country to protect and regulate shipping arrangements with the colonies.)

154. Ibid.

155. Ibid.

156. Ibid., pp. 148-149.

157. Ibid., p. 149.

158. Ibid., p. 153.

159. Ibid., pp. 154-155.

160. Ibid., p. 151.

161. Ibid.

162. See P.M. Netscher, History of the Colonies Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice. (Trans. W.E. Roth, Georgetown: 1931.) p. 136. The large plots of rich agricultural lands in Guiana and the prospect of the cultivation of sugar and other crops, made the colony quite attractive to British speculators.

163. Gallagher and Robinson, "*The Imperialism...*" pp. 151-152.

164. As early as the seventeenth century, the British authorities explored cost effective ways of administering the West Indian possessions. The strategies adopted ranged from leasing island units to Noble Personalities to encouraging various forms of 'Federation.' For a considerable period during the 17th century, Barbados and the Leeward Islands came under the jurisdiction of the Earle of Carlisle. He was given the authority to appoint local officials for each of the islands. See R. Greenwood and S. Hamber, Development and Decolonisation. (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1981.) p. 76.

165. In an attempt to avert any German attack during 1940, the British signed an agreement with the USA. The United States was given permission to establish military facilities in several British West Indian territories. These included Guiana, Trinidad, Antigua and Jamaica. In return, the US government made available fifty obsolete, but useable destroyers to the British war effort. See *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

166. A number of restrictions were placed on the mining of bauxite and the extraction of petroleum products by foreign companies.

167. See for example Peter Fraser, " *Some Effects of the First World War on the British West Indies*." Paper Presented at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, (During the Autumn and Spring Terms 1979.)

168. Shahabuddeen, Constitutional Development... pp. 460-463.

169. The evidence revealed that the people were highly dissatisfied with the move by the British government to suspend the constitution. See *ibid.*

170. The voters turn out was 74.8%, this was higher than what obtained in Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad, where the figures ranged between 53 and 65 per cent. See Cheddi Jagan, The West on Trial: The Fight for Guyana's Freedom. (London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1966.) p. 107.

171. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-127.

172. *Ibid.*

173. *Ibid.*

174. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

175. *Ibid.*, p. 126, see also Daily Mail October 7, 1953.

CHAPTER IV

Crisis and Initiative in the Development of Workers' Organisations in British Guiana: 'Grass Roots' Organisation and the Rise of Working People's Consciousness in the Early Decades of the Twentieth Century

is they who rose early in the morning
watching the moon die in the dawn
is they who heard the shell blow and the iron clang
is they who had no voice in the emptiness
in the unbelievable
in the shadowless...

Martin Carter 'Universal Hunger: in Paul Burnett (ed.)
Caribbean Verses in English. p. 214.

This chapter examines the early forms of workers' organisation which predated the larger and more organised trade union organisations in Guiana. Here attention is directed to 'work gangs' and the 'task gangs' of the period of enslavement. These structures evolved within the activities of the working people to provide order, stability and acceptable conditions of employment. During the latter part of the 19th century and early 20th century, 'friendly' societies and 'lodges' emerged.

An examination is made of the part played by churchmen and the media in educating the working people and also providing an avenue for articulating their grievances. Of importance, is the way the church capitalised upon the use of the pulpit as a popular political platform.

A logical development of this phase of working people's struggle is the way in which the movement was perceived as a part of and linked to the politics of the day. Emerging from this development also, were the leaders to champion the cause of the working people. An attempt is made to analyse the quality of the leadership provided by these individuals who were drawn

primarily but not exclusively, from the middle class.

Finally, I focus upon the emergence of the BGLU and the early trade union organisations in the country. These are examined in relation to the nature of leadership they were able to provide for the workers. Also, some of the factors which influenced their development: the question of legal recognition; registration; the attitude of the planters and other employers; the policy of the British Government; and the impact of the national and international events and trends. These factors were significant in raising working people's consciousness and uniting them in struggle for increased wages and better working conditions.

The emergence of trade unions in Guiana was part of a multifaceted struggle of a popular movement. This movement, although led by the middle class, [1] enjoyed a significant working people following. The movement emerged in response to the repressive conditions imposed by colonial capitalism. Approaches to trade unionism in Guiana and the impact of trade unions on the social and political development in the country, is best understood within the context of this popular struggle, which dominated the Guianese society from the 1880s until the attainment of flag and anthem independence in 1966. [2] The fundamental contradiction between labour and capital was always expressed in this struggle, as were minor contradictions between the upper and lower middle class, and between African and East Indian racial sections in the society. [3] Throughout, it was recognised by the members of these groups that organisation and co-operation were crucial to the success of their struggle.

Although the movement benefited from middle class representation, the progressive posture of this group was seriously questioned by the working people. [4] Many members of the middle class only aspired to be admitted to the ruling circle of expatriate or local whites.

In addition, the British authorities used the middle class aspirations to join the establishment, advance professionally and be socially acceptable-if not equal to the ruling class- as a convenient lever to check popular desire for change. The middle class were perceived and promoted as a strategic group, since it exerted great influences upon the working people chiefly by providing leaders who were perceived as significant role models. It should be noted that desirable reform was only possible through the active involvement of the working people. While the middle class led a genuinely popular movement, wage earners, common artisans, and small cultivators took the decision to present popular issues directly to the public demonstrations.

The Early Forms of Working People's Organisation

Collective Bargaining

The earliest attempts at worker self organisation in the Caribbean can be traced to the early years after emancipation. These early efforts were in the form of Task Gangs. The fundamental aim of these organisations was not unlike the trade unions which followed. Rodney noted that " The function of these gangs was to move from estate to estate, trying to establish rates of wages that were more favourable than those that were being offered." [5]

These Task Gangs emerged during the period of enslavement.

Planters on several plantations throughout the region, encouraged skilled artisans 'slaves' to form work gangs for economic ventures. They would hire the gangs out to neighbouring plantations to perform a number of tasks which required specialised knowledge. The planters recouped significant financial benefits from these ventures. [6]

During the early years of 'emancipation,' a large number of Africans earned their livelihood from waged labour. Most of the individuals who were classified as peasants in Guianese historiography, were in fact part-time workers for the most part. [7] They were workers on the sugar estate but they turned to the land for a certain amount of subsistence for their families. They might have had half an acre, sometimes no more than the house lot and a small portion of land attached to it. Commenting on this development, Rodney contends that " what was created after the abolition of slavery was a rural proletariat." [8]

During this early period, the workers tried to create some form of organisation that would advance their own interests. The Task Gangs which they created were similar to the Work Gangs or Jobbing Gangs which they were familiar with under previous work regimes. However, as free agents, the African worker were determined that the Task Gangs should reflect their new status through their ability to exercise freedom of choice. This choice included their preference for particular employers and conditions of employment.

The African workers clearly expected that the forced immobilisation of slavery and apprenticeship, symbolised by the pass laws, would disappear and they would be free to take their

persons, their skills and labour to whatever location they chose. It is also significant that this was a regional trend. Workers migrated from areas of low wages (Barbados and the Leeward and Windward Islands) to areas of high wages (Trinidad and Guiana) [9]

The gangs were used to negotiate the terms and conditions under which tasks were to be performed. Generally, there was a distinct preference for uncontracted employment, for task work and job work. This reflected the workers' intention to control their time and pursue their own interests. What these loose arrangements could provide was maximum flexibility; the opportunity to seek cash when that supplement was required; the opportunity to plan the allocation of time and labour between plantation work, their own provision grounds, the market, or other employment; the opportunity to maximise earnings from plantation labour. [10]

In addition, workers had clear views about the desirable level of wages, and employers' refusal to meet their wishes as well as employers' attempt to effect unilateral wage reduction provoked intense and prolonged resistance. This was particularly evident in Guiana in January 1842, Jamaica in 1838-39 and 1841 and in Trinidad in 1843, where strikes lasted for several weeks. [11] The workers' notions of a just and equitable wage rate at emancipation was based on the level of wages paid for free time during the Apprenticeship period [12] and on the cost of basic necessities. Employers' offers were often 30% to 50% below the acceptable minimum. [13] Even at this early stage of their activities as free agents, the workers were acutely aware of the

way they were exploited by their employers. Such exploitation created marked inequalities between them and the capitalists within the society. The observation of the Jamaican William Allen in September 1841, is useful and instructive:

De Busha all hab five to six horse, dem lib well, nyam belly full; lib na good house; we lib na hut... we pay half a dollar rent; den dem want to gib we shilling a day. Tell me now, how much lef fa ya when week out? No half a dollar lef fe you? Den wha fa ya buy fish? Den Den whu fe we gib parson? De Busha get ten shilling a day; dem want to rob we... Unoo will take one shilling a day? (No, No, from audience) Well, den (s) tick out fe good pay and see if dem no oblige and bound fe gee what we ax a day. [14]

A very important feature of the gangs, was that they concentrated upon the rate of wages for a particular crop or type of job. For example, for harvesting, or planting or weeding. The task would be defined and they would have the rate of wages set on that occasion. Thereafter, they kept themselves free to reopen negotiations for another task under different conditions. They were very sensitive to the numerous factors which emerged from time to time to influence their performance on the job. These included the state of the weather, nature of the crop, [15] time taken to get to the fields, cutting and fetching [16] and many others. In this, they demonstrated a very modern way of looking at their work situation. They recognised that job conditions vary and therefore their return from labour should vary. Hence they did not want to commit themselves to contracts which were inflexible and did not respond to the variation in the job scene.

However, continued exploitation of workers by the employers created a greater need for workers' representation in relation

to wages and also living and working conditions. In pursuit of these wider objectives, there was the desire for larger and more representative organisations to replace the task gangs. The concept of work organisation or self organisation was at the very core of the society which the African workers established.

The predominantly African village workers were the most advanced section of the plantation labourforce and among the most developed among the working class element in the country. [17] In comparison with the East Indian indentured workers who resided on the plantations, the village workers had much more scope for resistance (and bargaining) at the point of production and in the wider social arena. In addition, Rodney informs us that " their wage nexus with the estates was not compounded by other dependency relations arising out of tied housing, pasturage and rice beds." [18] Such connections with the estate militated against the East Indian workers' ability to act as free agents.

In groups and as individuals, the African workers devised a series of tactics designed to frustrate the application of labour. To produce sugar without slaves necessitated many of the same supervisory problems. First and foremost, the struggle was waged between free workers and managers around the question of how much could be extracted from the labourer in any given work situation. [19] Experienced African workers used certain strategems to lighten their work load. In a significant way, the workers were attempting to redefine the amount of labour that should go into a particular task. In an attempt to curtail such practices, the planters resorted to the law. The workers were advanced enough to respond by challenging these claims in court.

One such occasion was on the 3rd July 1880, when four African workers openly challenged their conviction on a charge of breach of contract by committing fraud and deception while cutting cane.

[20]

Even in the factory, where work was not entirely dependent on minute supervision, workers tried to get the better of the factory management in ways analogous to the tactics of the field hands. For example 'accidental' breakages often occurred, sometimes forcing the factory to shut down for many hours in the midst of grinding. Disgruntled factory hands assisted this process by deliberately leaving pieces of iron on the cane carriers. [21]

A dissatisfied work force (and one that was experienced) was clearly likely to intensify its efforts to reduce the exploitation of its own labour. They implemented every means to ensure that the labour relations changed. The Rev. Glasgow, a pillar of the creole community, told the West India Royal Commission that the system of sugar production in the country did not suit free labour. He elaborated " The system of working sugar estate is peculiar. Even the coolies themselves, when their time is expired do not like to go back... Free people cannot be depended on, if the thing is to be carried on as it is now.... The whole system must be discarded; sugar estates are carried on almost in the same way as they were a little after slavery or during slavery. " [22]

Although the majority of the African workers lived outside the limits of the estates, almost every aspect of their lives was influenced by the activities of this unit. In such an

environment, they found it necessary to defend their interests as workers, peasants and small craft producers. The organisational forms and strategies which were forged during enslavement and the early period of freedom, were transformed into more structured organisations. These organisations provided the exposure and training for many members of the working class who played prominent roles in the workers' organisations which developed in society.

Community Organisation

(i) Friendly Societies and Lodges

Friendly Societies were also called Benevolent Societies and Benefit Societies. The move to establish these societies in Guiana, can be traced to the 1880s. [23] the organisations had as their primary function the provision of benefits to members in times of sickness and death. [24] The societies also rendered valuable assistance during periods of acute unemployment. Policies were designed to closely monitor the social and economic condition of the villagers and urban dwellers. " Their intimate identification with the African community was demonstrated at the Emancipation Jubilee on August 1888, when they staged a magnificent and mammoth parade of costumed members through the streets of Georgetown. " [25]

In England these societies were well established by the first decade of the 19th century. [26] The friendly benefits which every craft union provided were regarded as a crucial element in the control of working conditions. [27] Fox et. al. noted that " Such societies of men working at the same craft inevitably turned their attention to trade matters from time to

time; and this might become a permanent and organised interest."

[28] This tendency was illustrated by the London Compositors in 1834. [29]

In addition, the workers realised quite early that the Benevolent societies could have been incorporated into their wider strategy for union development and union recognition. The workers capitalised on the advantages of disguising a trade society as a friendly club acceptable to employers and protected by the law. [30]

At a time when trade unions were not fully developed the societies played a crucial role in maintaining levels of wages and general working conditions. " Accident, sickness, and superannuation benefits all helped to keep off the labour market men whose quality of work had suffered some temporary or permanent decline which might tempt them to undermine customary wage rates or working conditions." [31]

The commonest benefit of all, the funeral allowance, [32] afford no direct support for the formation of trade union organisations, but, along with the other benefits, it provided a cohesive force in bad times. " Benefits which might be needed any day held more attraction for a society's members than the distant possibility of campaigns against the employers over wages or conditions when times should improve." [33]

Benefits were used by several societies as a means of imposing discipline among its members. The societies had detailed rules to regulate almost every aspect of their activities. The members expelled for behaviour 'contrary to the interests of the trade' had no claim to the money they contributed. [34] Members

who had been paying their contributions for several years, were likely to feel that they had an investment not lightly to be sacrificed.

Throughout Guiana, several of these societies developed and attracted large membership from among the working people. The Liberal noted the large turnout at the *colourful* public parade of *The Demerara Hand of Justice Mutual Assistance Society*. [35] Among the other societies which created an impact in the Guianese society were the following: *The Printers' Benevolent Society*, established in 1854; *the Teachers' Benevolent Society*, in existence from 1852; [36] *the Bakers Association*, came into existence from 1888 and the *Guianese Patriotic Club and Mechanics Union*, established by E.A. Trotz in 1890. [37]

These societies, as in England, played a leading role in workers' organisation-calling meetings and even discussing wages and conditions of work-during a period when it was illegal to form trade union. They served this purpose in almost all of the territories within the region. For example, in November 1916 Joseph Nathan and a group of agricultural workers formed a union in the island of St. Kitts. In response, the Legislative Council, with the Governor support, instituted the Trade and Labour Unions (Prohibition) Ordinance. This ordinance made the formation of trade unions in St. Kitts illegal and provided for a sentence of six months imprisonment or a fine of £50 for any individual involved in forming unions, or printing or distributing literature about unions. [38]

In an attempt to 'keep ahead' of the authorities, Nathan and his colleagues formed the 'Universal Benevolent Association.'

Organised in this guise, the leaders were quick to disclose the real function to the workers who followed them: "...with the labour union we could fix the price of labour for you, but under the heading of this Society, we cannot fix the price but you ought to know how much to ask for your labour and to see that you get it." [39]

Although these organisations did not survive in their original form throughout the decades, they, through their activities and support, emerged to be a central feature in the development of working people's consciousness. In a significant way also, they represented the initial move towards the formation of craft unions. [40] Added to these points is their role in the vanguard of the political movement of the day.

For example, *the Teachers' Mutual Improvement Society*, which emerged in the 1880s, was transformed into the *Teachers' Association*. This Association functioned as one of the earliest prototype trade unions in Guiana, undertaking the task of bargaining collectively with the State and Church Management over pay, conditions of work and educational reforms in general. [41]

Primary School teachers were by far the most organised, militant and articulate. Through their quasi union, the *British Guiana Teachers' Association*, they emerged in the forefront of the political struggle. In a number of ways, the deprivations and exploitation suffered by the teachers was similar to that experienced by other categories of workers. Teachers salaries were periodically reduced through the counter productive system of payment by results. [42] Furthermore, teachers were arbitrarily dismissed by School Managers, often with no avenue

for appeal.

In response to a report by the Commission appointed to investigate and report on the state of education in Guiana in 1875, Mr. Robertson, a senior teacher, made the following observation:

I cannot concur in the decision come to in the case of elementary education. When saying so I believe I only echo the opinions of the great majority of the inhabitants of this colony who look upon the recommendations of the Commission as a mere palliation of existing defects...in a few years we shall hear of another Commission being appointed to inquire into the causes of the continued failure of education. [43]

Among the proposals put forward for the improvement of the education system, was the need for greater stability in the appointment of Schoolmasters. It was proposed that they should be entitled to appeal before the Board of Education, in all cases of dismissal. [44] In spite of these proposals, Robertson's comment proved to have some justification when in 1900 teachers appealed to the Executive Council, which upheld their views. [45] However, the Colonial government refused to reverse the decision of the expatriate managers. [46]

Teachers were conscious of themselves as part of a wider struggle. Quite apart from their politicisation of educational issues, they sought to influence the political process directly by agitating on a programme which also took up issues that affected other category of workers. The idea of establishing central sugar factories owned by government was designed to foster 'fair remuneration and reasonable profit' between peasant proprietors and factory owners while bypassing planters as owners of existing factories. Support for competitive examinations for

appointment to the civil service, satisfied Guianese civil servants and echoed a long held demand of the Reform Movement. [47] A number of other reform demands included various taxes on the rich, reduction of votes for the Police and Medical Departments, and an end to East Indian immigration. [48]

(ii) Religion and Religious Leaders

Along with the teachers and other categories of workers, the church played an active and meaningful role in organising and educating the working people. Outstanding churchmen such as the Rev. Frank, the Rev. Glasgow and the Rev. DalGLISH, emerged as champions of the working people's cause. From the workers standpoint, the church was perceived as a religious, social and political centre. [49]

Religion is an important aspect of the life of the Africans. Religious issues between Africans and Europeans are as old as African enslavement itself. Very early in the system, planters strongly opposed the practice of African religion. They had a profound fear for what they could not understand (ancestor worship {*Duppies*}) [50] or penetrate (the complex kinship structure and the secret societies which sustained the religious rituals.) [51] The planters, intent on exercising total control over their property in person, had from the beginning of African enslavement waged a relentless campaign " through punitive legislation and exemplary punishment " [52] against those vestiges of African religious practices which had survived the crossing and the dispersion of communities. [53]

Because of systematic persecution, by the 1830s, much of the practices and rituals associated with *Obeah and Myalism*, [54]

were driven underground. However, the introduction of the Missionary bodies [55] in the Caribbean, gave rise to a new sense of religious freedom within the African community. This was seen in the enthusiastic participation of blacks in the Missionary Churches and the religious syncretism which they made possible. " The development was as troubling to planters as African religious practices had been because they saw in the Mission Church elements disruptive of plantation routine and subversive of existing social arrangement. " [56]

The Mission Churches, according to the planters, were conspiring with the 'enemies' of the slave system (the members of the anti-slavery society in England) to hasten emancipation. Further, they were convinced that there was a direct link between the teachings of the Mission Church and the slave rebellions of 1823 and 1831 in Demerara (Guiana) and Jamaica, respectively. [57]

From the Africans' point of view, however, the Mission Church was probably, after the Sunday market, the most important institution in their lives, because it provided, recreation, fellowship, solace, the rudiments of education and leadership opportunities. Secondly, the Mission Church provided a legal and respectable means by which they could consolidate or reconstitute a '*culture focus*'- " those aspects of the life of the people which hold the greatest interest for them. " [58]

The blacks' culture focus featured religion in a very meaningful way, but, as indicated above, this was systematically suppressed. Now, under cover of the Mission Church, it was possible for a black religious revival to take place-a religious

revival with at least three features:

a-the obvious, conversion to christianity;
b-also the reinterpretation of Christianity in the light of surviving religious beliefs to produce syncretized religious forms, the Afro-Christian cults, mainly symbolized by the Native or Black Baptists (spirit possession, the leader system) {also the Jordanites};
c-not so obvious, the revival and extension of reconstituted African religious forms-Myalism, Kumina, etc.-often functioning as a part of the Mission Church and clearly contributing to syncretism. [59]

The black involvement in the new churches, whether they were Mission or Afro-Christian, was often the expression of *political activity*. Missionaries, particularly the Baptist and Methodist, were perceived by Africans (and planters) as abolitionist in sympathy if not in action, and the conclusion was easily drawn that, through their contact with their London headquarters, they were quietly working with the abolitionists for ending of slavery. Africans therefore may have viewed their association with the missionaries as providing them with a 'respectable' political leadership, a leadership which, because of its social status and metropolitan connections could not be easily lopped off, even though viewed as subversive. [60]

This affiliation is testimony to the fact that even at this early period the Africans were quick to identify and form alliance with progressive forces within the society. At the same, Afro-Christian cults were clearly associated with resistance to the *status quo*-in their songs (take force with force), in their liturgy, in their leadership and organisation of slave rebellions. [61]

This trend was evident in Jamaica during the first decade of 'emancipation' when Baptist Missionaries went into formal

politics on the island. They campaigned for voter registration among blacks and fielding candidates in elections. [62]

In keeping with this position, in 1917, the Rev. Frank made a call for the formation of a trade union in the town of New Amsterdam. (This call represented one of the earliest initiatives towards the formation of trade unions in Guiana.) Rev. Frank lived in England for a number of years and was acquainted with workers' organisation in Britain. On his return to Guiana, he was surprised at the widespread exploitation of the working people. In response, he devoted much time in assisting workers in the establishment of representative organisations.

Frank played a leading role in promoting working people's consciousness in New Amsterdam. [63] Supported by J. Eleazer, a solicitor, he informed the gathering, at a large inaugural meeting, that the rules of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, (AEU) of England, were to be used as the basis for drafting the rules of the proposed union. [64] This decision was taken because of the popularity of the AEU in the UK, [65] and the fact that by 1905, the leadership of this union was strongly influenced by the socialist views of the day. [66]

Rev. Frank used the church as an effective forum to educate and mobilise the workers. For example, it was from the pulpit of the Independent Congregational Church in New Amsterdam, that the Reverend insisted on mobilisation and organisation of workers into a trade union with sections representing the various categories of workers. It was at this forum, also, that he launched periodic attacks on the government for its failure to promulgate legislation to regulate hours of work and wages. [67]

He, in a forceful way, expressed the view that the church had a moral responsibility to champion the cause of the working people. " Where was the church..." He asked, " It was said to be the mouthpiece of the people, but now they had a terrible crisis it allowed them to go as sheep without a shepherd." [68]

The crisis to which the Reverend alluded was the sharp rise in the cost of living. From 1915 to 1917, it was estimated that the cost of living in the country had doubled. Although the workers demonstrated against this state of affairs, their only success was a mere 10% wage increase to meet the rising cost of living. On this occasion, the workers were defeated because of poor organisation and a lack of leadership. [69]

Militant political protest from the pulpit was taken to new heights with the arrival of the Rev. Shirley from England in July 1900 to take charge of the New Amsterdam Mission Church. [70] Shortly after his arrival the Chronicle reported an " Extraordinary Speech by Mr. Shirley " at Providence Congregational, Georgetown. Among other things Shirley affirmed:

The church should be alive to the fact that its safety and prosperity depended on the contentment, enlightenment and general goodwill of the toilers and masses of the people... As he moved in and out among the people, his difficulty was to find anybody contented unless they happened to be connected with the Government. He never was anywhere where there was [not] an undercurrent of discontent. What was simmering in his mind was the thought that Government about which nobody had any good to say could not have been much good in it. (Applause)... The burden of taxation fell on the poor and it was meant to fall on the poor. (Loud applause. Mr. Shirley had again to call for silence) First the Government does not care much about the people; secondly, the people at home (in Britain) knew next to nothing about them; thirdly, the people here did not realise themselves yet.... He was driven to the conclusion that it was the intention if possible to keep the black and coolie race in ignorance. (Loud applause). They should break no law but they should organise themselves and revive their political association. All the labourers and all the employees of the colony from the clerk to the coolie should form trade unions so that no employer should be able to dismiss a man for asking simple honest justice.... Break no law but exercise the right to free speech, and agitate, for it is both legitimate and imperative. [71]

It is instructive that Rev. Shirley's remarks were representative of blacks and East Indians—the two major racial sections of the working people. This position reflected the broad based nature of the struggle. Shirley, like many other leaders of the working people, was attacked by the spokesmen of the establishment. [72] However, he persisted, pointing out that there was nothing new or extreme in what he was saying. In addition, " he adroitly remarked that words were superfluous when the working people had ` enough to incite them in actual occurrences. " [73]

Churchmen were also active among the workers at the community level, giving practical advice and support on matters affecting the daily life of the villagers. During 1865 when the country was faced with the threat of a cholera epidemic, the villagers of Beterverwagting convened a public meeting at the

London Missionary school house. The main speakers were the Revds. Messrs. Milner and Warder. Rev. Milner outlined the nature of the disease and stressed the need for the villagers to be brave and fight the disease. The churchmen donated lime juice and medicines and gave instructions on precautions to be taken in preventing the spread of the disease. [74]

(iii) The Popular Press

Another important development of the working people's politics was the emergence of several radical publications which provided a forum to discuss matters affecting the popular cause and instruct the masses [75] in their political rights. The Young People's Improvement Society [76] launched a penny weekly, the People newspaper in September 1901. This paper was edited by the Rev. Shirley and supported by Patrick Dargan, A.A. Thorne, Wood Davis, A.B. Brown, T.B. Glasgow, Dr. London, Dr. Wills, C.E. Farnum and J.S. McArthur—to name the most prominent of the middle class radicals. [77] The object was for this newspaper to be owned by the common people. It was sold for one penny so as to bring it within reach of the section of the public for which it was intended. [78]

The teachers published the first issue of the Teachers Guide in October 1900. [79] This organ, boldly pledged to "take cognisance of everything that affects the intellectual and moral welfare of the people." [80] Teachers were very conscious of themselves as part of a wider struggle, and made firm alliances with other groups. As a group, they were in the forefront of those who responded to the People as a unique organ of the working people. Along with other groups within the society, they

strongly opposed the " Planter Party " during the election of October-November 1901. [81] This was made possible by the broadening of the franchise by the 1891 constitution, [82] together with the introduction of direct election by the elitist College of Electors. [83] This move led to the progressive displacement of the European class from the legislature by representatives of the black and coloured sections of the community. [84] However, much of this progress towards self-government was checked when the British Government saw it necessary to introduce a Crown Colony system of government in 1928. [85]

Other publications such as The Villager and later The Tribune were part of the tradition of small radical independent publications. The Echo emerged as one of the earliest organs to cover the activities of the villagers. The Liberal known for its reputation of monitoring the political issues which affected the working people, boldly proclaimed in July 1891 " The time has arrived when the wishes of the people, the 'Vox Populi' must be more directly ascertained, and once ascertained, carried into effect... It is a recognised rule of constitutionalism that the majority must prevail." [86]

By the beginning of the 20th century, it was possible to derive, at least from newspaper sources, the following constituent elements:

- 1-unflinching criticism of the colonial government in public forums;
- 2-publication of a newspaper organ to carry agitation beyond indoor meeting places;
- 3-involvement of working people in financing the newspaper;
- 4-use of public forums and newspapers to advance a consistent policy on fundamental issues;
- 5-establishment of community organisations to provide for regular public discussions;
- 6-a call for the creation of trade unions; and
- 7-launching of a political organisation for the furtherance of the above objectives. [87]

The popular press published articles which promoted the activities of the working people within the villages and on the plantations. The media was also a forum for advocating working people's demands. A prominent feature of workers' demands during the first two decades of this century, was the need to establish labour unions. In pursuit of this objective, the workers received much support from the People's Association or the People's Party, [88] which was established in 1903.

Trade Unions-The Early Attempts

At the turn of the century, the concept of worker organisation or self organisation was taken to a higher level by the workers of the larger territories of the region. In Jamaica and Trinidad, workers banded together in organisations in the pursuit of their professional interests. [89] In Jamaica, unions were formed by teachers and skilled tradesmen: Carpenters, Bricklayers and Painters in 1907 and by Cigar Makers in 1908. In Trinidad, the formation of the Trinidad Workingmen's Association in 1897 had a profound influence on the development of trade unions in the Windward Islands. [90]

In British Guiana, the first distinct organisation of this nature was the BOOT AND SHOE MAKING ASSOCIATION, which was

organised in November, 1889 by J.E.Denny and another individual known as " Shoe Black." [91] the first serious call for the formation of a full fledged trade union, was made in 1905 by Dr. J.M. Rohlehr, a radical middle class politician whose call had a basis in the frustration of fighting a narrow political struggle against colonial capital. [92] This was largely because of their inability to elect their own representatives. It is also significant that this call came in the wake of a major workers' protest. [93]

In 1910, an attempt was made by River Captains and Bowmen to form an organisation to redeem wages due to them by defaulting gold, diamond and balata companies. " Fifty men met at the residence of Mr. Henry Humphrey at Lot 163 Wellington Street, Georgetown, in January 1910. Their idea was to form an agency which would be responsible for the hiring of Captains and Bowmen and which would protect them." [94]

Exactly seven years later, January 1917, another attempt was made in New Amsterdam, Berbice. This call was made through the initiative of the Rev.R.T. Frank. Rev. Frank since his return from England, devoted much time in assisting workers in the establishment of representative organisations. He played a leading role in promoting working people's consciousness in the town of New Amsterdam. [95]

In addition to the attempts mentioned above, several categories of workers, responded to the crises by binding themselves into closer workers' units. One category of workers to take the initiative was the carpenters in February, 1917. This attempt, however, was made mainly to secure employment for

members of the profession. The venture was more along the lines of a TRADE PROTECTION SOCIETY, with benevolent benefits, rather than a trade union. However, it was given the title CARPENTERS UNION. Although similar attempts were made by other categories of skilled workers-as in the case of Jamaica-they failed to develop into lasting trade unions. This was due to a number of factors which are examined in the following section.

Early Difficulties

Encouraging as this start was, permanent trade unions in Guiana, did not emerge during this period. Although this was due to several factors, the most outstanding appeared to be that throughout the period, (1890s-the 1920s) trade unions in the colony were denied registration because they were illegal organisations. This lack of recognition, placed the early unions at the mercy of the authorities and the employers. Their existence and the extent to which they were able to intervene in workers' conflict was dictated by the Governor. In the absence of a clear policy statement from the Colonial Office, the Governor, in discharging this duty, was significantly influenced by the employers' position in disputes between capital and labour. [96] Under these conditions, the early unions were largely ineffective and short-lived.

The issue of registration (or the absence of this status) was used as a weapon by employers to prevent workers from participating in popular demonstrations. Employers applied numerous strategies in victimising workers. These included reduction in wages; dismissal and in some cases, prosecution for their role in strike action. Faced with these sanctions, many

workers were reluctant to give open and unconditional support to the budding organisations.

The question of the financial state of the unions also posed a number of problems. Commenting upon this feature in the ex-British colonies in Africa, Banks noted that " The unions have large paper memberships but only small sections of these regularly pay contributions." [97] At the end of the first year of its existence, the British Guiana Labour Union (BGLU), had over 7,000 members on its books. However, less than half of these members were financial. [98]

Many workers, because of low wages and job insecurity, found it difficult to keep up with the payment of their union dues. With a limited budget, the unions found it difficult to pay salaried officers and keep up with the working costs of the organisation. This often resulted in inefficiency and delay in the unions' activities. In addition, it was not unusual for the assets of the organisations to be repossessed for failure to meet payments.

Prominent Individuals and Political Agitation

Trade union development in the Caribbean was closely linked to the movement for political reform in the territories. In several cases, the trade union organisations provided the necessary training for potential political leaders. In some of the territories it was difficult to separate the union from the political party. [99]

For example trade unions formed an integral part of a political struggle against Crown Colony Government. In Guiana, this struggle was a progressive response of the working people

to the social, economic and political deprivations to which they were subjected. The struggle was given momentum by the emergence of the middle class and its role in providing leadership and guidance to the struggle. In addition, much support was obtained from several economic and professional organisations; The legal Association [100] and the Bakers' Association. [101] The British Guiana Teachers' Mutual Improvement Association, formed in 1852 and revived in 1888 as the British Guiana Teachers' Association [102] and the People's Association, among several others.

The People's Association, also called The People's Political Association [103] was organised in 1903 by Guianese as a conscious reaction to the economic and political realities besetting their colonial society. In a significant way this Association was in the vanguard of a movement committed to redefining the nature of the struggle. The Association advocated a new politics which called for sustained public criticism of the Colonial Government, a popular newspaper owned by the people to articulate these views, consistent policies on basic issues to be carried at public forums and in newspapers, promotion of regular discussion through the formation of community organisations and the establishment of a trade union and political organ. [104]

The first President and main organiser of the Association was C.E.D Farnum, a lawyer and member of the Combined Court. [105] However, its most prominent and long standing leaders were Stephen A Robertson and Hildred Aaron Britton, respectively Chairman and Secretary for most of its existence. Robertson who was born at Liverpool Village on the West Coast of Berbice, also

served as headteacher and President of the British Guiana Teacher's Association for many years. In addition, he was Village Father of Agricola Village on the East Bank of the Demerara River and a member of the then defunct Progressive Association. His political support among the Guianese working people was formidable and his judgement sound. In 1916 the Daily Chronicle, a leading liberal newspaper, described him as " a brave fighter, a keen debator and ardent politician [who] had been unwavering in his loyalty to the people " and whose position as President of the People's Association had kept him " in close touch with every movement designed to improve the condition of the masses. " [106]

Aaron Britton who resided at Plaisance, on the East Coast Demerara, was a Sanitary Inspector with the Georgetown City Council. He was also Village Councillor, Chairman of the Farmers' Association and Treasurer of the Co-operative Credit Bank. From this base he was able to reach a wide audience, being also Editor of the Tribune, a small radical independent weekly devoted to the cause of the workers. [107] During the Ruimveldt Incident in 1924, Britton performed duties as Special Constable and gave evidence, on behalf of the workers, at the 'Ruimveldt Inquiry.'

The nature of the leadership provided by Robertson and Britton, reflected the growing radicalisation of the lower middle class and the masses as a result of their dissatisfaction with the quality of middle class representation in the legislature. The other leaders of the People's Association reflected the wide range of social and economic groups which existed in the society during the period. Prominent among the personalities who

represented these sections of the community were: McLean Ogle, a solicitor and his brother, S.W. Ogle, proprietor of a rice factory in the village of Buxton on the East Coast Demerara. Other solicitors and lawyers included J. Eleazer, Aloysius de Weaver, Eustace Gordon Woolford, Andrew Benjamin Browne, Philip Nathaniel Browne, Francis Dias, Joseph Alexander Luckhoo, and S.J. Wills. [108] There were also, the Rev. J. Hull Hendricks, J.P. Santos, who was the largest merchant in Georgetown; J.M. Rohlehr, a medical doctor; Alfred Athiel Thorne, an educationalist; and Patrick Dargan, a barrister.

Personalities such as Thorne, Rohlehr and Dargan were well known for their militancy. Because of this the striking workers sought them out, and they responded through their attempts to publicise working people's grievances and the workers' version of the altercations between themselves and employers or the police. [109]

Thorne had always been an indefatigable worker on questions of educational reforms. In 1894, he established in Georgetown a private secondary school known as the *Middle School*. This drew the bond closer between himself and aspiring post-primary students who had little hope of entering Queens College (the country's premier and earliest secondary school) or the Catholic Grammar school. [110]

Dr. Rohlehr is credited with the distinction of making one of the earliest demands for the formation of a trade union. [111] In his professional capacity as a medical officer, he placed much emphasis on health and sanitation for the residents of Georgetown and the East Coast. He launched a determined battle for the

government to provide medical facilities for the villages and other rural communities. [112]

Patrick Dargan, apart from his fame as a legal representative of the 'common man,' gained additional recognition in his career during the 1905 workers' incident. Dargan was able to create a new reputation for himself by representing the relatives of the workers killed during the incident. As a member of the Court of Policy, he asked questions which probed and embarrassed the regime. He was the editor of the Creole which 'hammered' the colonial administration over the riots and shootings. In his capacity as a lawyer, Dargan was also involved in one of the most sensational developments in Guiana's colonial legal history, which was the filing of accounts against the Inspector-General and a Major of the Police Force, alleging that they were criminally liable for the deaths of persons shot by the police. [113]

Personalities such as Thorne, Robertson and S.H.A. Bunyan, who were in the leadership of the Association, were also senior teachers. They had a firm political base among teachers, particularly Primary School teachers. From a very early period of the century, teachers emerged as the most organised, militant and articulate group of workers within the popular forces. [114] They were in the vanguard of the struggle for better living and working conditions. Possessing a quasi-union in the BGTA when other categories of workers were not organised at this level, is testimony to the level of organisation of the teachers. Teachers continued at the forefront of the Association's supporters until they were replaced by dock workers led by Hubert Nathaniel

Critchlow in a process that began with the workers' protest of 1905. [115]

The 1905 Workers' Incident

Like the Ruimveldt Incident in 1924, the 1905 workers' protest involved workers from the city and the East Bank of Demerara. In addition, several workers from Plantation Ruimveldt were the first to lose their lives. [116] This Incident occurred during the period November 28 to December 6, 1905. The activities began when Stevedores from several wharves in Georgetown decided to take a stand on the question of wage rate which had stagnated for nearly three decades. [117] On November 29, porters employed at Ruimveldt estate began a strike at midday. This act set the stage for an alliance between the city workers and estate workers. [118]

The authorities responded by sending out the military and by the sixth day of the strike most of the workers reported for work. Although this Incident marked an important moment in workers' response to capital, it suffered from a number of weaknesses. In 1905, the workers did not possess any organisation which was capable of facilitating sustained struggle. The working class organisations which emerged in the 1880s—such as the Political Reform Club of 1887—did not survive into the new century. Also, there was not trade union to mobilise the workers. Commenting upon this aspect of the incident, Rodney notes " . . .grievances burst to the fore spontaneously in November 1905, and there were no structures to plan or guide the worker movement either at the place of work or in the streets. " [119]

However, the significance of this Incident was in the fact

that labour leaders recognised these limitations and took steps to improve the effectiveness of the struggle. For example, the period after 1905 witnessed sustained and popular demands for the formation of trade union. In addition, the lessons in organisation and demonstration were instructive for prominent labour leaders such as Dargan, Thorne and Critchlow. Much of the organisational structures which emerged in 1905 (untested and ineffective), matured into effective systems of communication by 1924.

From a relatively 'humble background,' [120] Critchlow emerged to play a leading role in trade unionism in Guiana and the Caribbean. He is credited with the establishment of the British Guiana Labour Union (BGLU), one of the first trade unions in the English-speaking Caribbean. Apart from being a trade unionist, Critchlow joined forces with stalwarts such as E.F. Fredericks, T.T. Nichols, J.A. Dingwall and E.P. Bruyning, to promote the programme of the popular Negro Progress Convention (NPC). [121]

Though participation in electoral politics was almost exclusively the preserve of the middle and ruling classes because the great majority of the working people were excluded from the franchise and from representing themselves in the legislature, the People's Association attempted to fill this vacuum by addressing a range of issues which were of direct interest to the masses.

For example, a section of the Association's 1906 Manifesto draws attention to the condition of the masses with a statement on the Association's aim to stimulate awareness of the disastrous

conditions endured by the masses and the need for remedial methods within both the people themselves and the government; to secure for the masses fair and unfettered opportunities for their own " industrial, moral and ethical advancement;" and generally " to give definite shape and expression to the hitherto virtually inarticulate cry of a landless and disheartened populace." [122]

The exclusion of the majority of Guianese from formal politics had succeeded in totally banishing their influence within the Legislative and Executive structures in the country through the restriction of the impact of popular organisations within these bodies. However, the working people attended political meetings and contributed to political debate whether or not they had the vote. The redefinition of radical politics within the Reform Movement [123] sought to connect with this tradition by emphasising extra-parliamentary political activities. It is in the extra-parliamentary sphere of organisation that the Association exercised its greatest impact.

The working people of Guiana had always sought to organise their own salvation, partly through the development of organisations within their ranks. These ranged from village and young people's improvement associations, farmers association, friendly and burial societies and co-operative credit banks. The People's Association was able to graft itself upon these structures. This was made possible because many of the leaders of these organisations were lower-middle class radicals who found the politics of the Association compelling. [124]

The People's Association undoubtedly reflected the mood and posture of popular politics during the period by being more

radical and more organised than its predecessors, and generating wide support among the masses. However, it was still largely a middle class organisation representing working people's cause. In spite of its efforts, fundamental issues such as the vote for women and the widening of the franchise to include the majority in the society, were unresolved. For example only 0.89 per cent of the people living in Guiana had the vote in 1901; 1.19 per cent in 1906; 1.37 per cent in 1911; 1.28 per cent in 1916; 1.08 per cent in 1922; and 4.16 per cent in 1926. [125]

Economic and social conditions also declined during the period. The war of 1914-1918 increased the poverty of the masses and made them conscious of the source of their impoverish state and official British racism. [126] Heavy price increases were recorded since 1913, [127] while wages, much of which had remained static from the end of the previous century, lost half their purchasing power between 1914 and 1916. [128]

These conditions increased the propensity to militancy on the part of the masses who organised a series of strikes and demonstrations. Emerging from these activities, were the first serious attempts to establish 'fully' constituted labour unions. It is instructive that union leaders such as Dr. Rohlehr and Critchlow, through the activities of the People's Association, received much training and motivation to organise.

A New Wave of Trade Unionism

During the period 1905 to 1924, the move towards effective workers' organisation and the establishment of trade unions, entered a new and revolutionary phase. A distinctive feature of this period in Guiana, was the active involvement of the dock

workers in the city and the sugar workers on the plantations. For an appreciation of their activities, it is necessary to examine a number of developments during the period. Foremost among these are the nature of Labour Law in the colony and the impact of the first European War.

Colonial Labour Law

At the beginning of the century, it was the 'Immigration Ordinance' of 1891 that regulated labour conditions on the sugar estates. [129] This law was enacted by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Court of Policy. According to Chase, " It was a masterpiece of class legislation in content. Its operation and enforcement were equally onesided. " [130] Although the law provided clear directions in relation to conditions of employment, [131] it was common knowledge that the planters never observed these, [132] nor were they prosecuted for infractions of this and many other sections of the law. The following comment by the Chronicle's Beterverwagting Correspondent on November 12, 1903, is useful and revealing:

The limitation of working hours on sugar estates continues to be a matter of serious moment in this country,...Very many instances are on record in which labourers on sugar factories have been brought to sudden and violent death caused by machinery in motion and under the care of those who were managed by them, and in the majority of cases the evidence went to show that the victims were caught in the toils of nodding while on duty as a result of too much work and too little sleep.

During the grinding season it is the rule with management of all or most sugar estates to have labourers working in factories at least twenty hours every day and this taxes the strength of the labourers so great that at the end of the grinding season they are probably mor dead than alive.

It is a remarkable fact that under the circumstances the management showed little or no concern whatever for the wellbeing of those who from dire necessity are compelled to work under the revolting conditions described...

This slavish hardship has been going on for a long time...it will continue as it is so long as the government hesitate to introduce a proper labour law... [133]

Because the East Indians accounted for the majority of the resident plantation labour, and many were contracted labourers by the turn of the century, they were the ones most affected by this Ordinance. Under the law, the indentured immigrant was subjected to fines, imprisonment and loss of pay for failure to complete tasks adequately. In addition, there were penalties for drunkenness, fraud or willful deception in the performance of their work and insulting words or gestures to their employers or anyone placed in authority on the estate. [134] Although a minimum wage was stipulated, the employers were often in breach of this regulation. [135]

Apart from the restrictive labour regulations, the indentured immigrants' ability to explore the most suitable employer and conditions of employment was seriously restricted. For example, the immigrant was restricted to his plantation of residence. It was illegal for anyone else to employ him unless he produced a certificate of exemption from labour, which was not

easy to obtain. [136] In general, the immigrant could not move from one estate to another, without a pass from his employer.

These restrictions and the fact that workers were brought on a contractual basis, to be returned to their homeland after five years (in the case of men) and three years (in the case of women) it was difficult for them to develop any firm attachment to the industry. This situation also militated against the formation of any large and well co-ordinated organisation or for strong leadership to emerge. It was not until 1917, with the legal termination of the indentureship system, that these workers organised.

Another example of class legislation which was introduced was the Employers and Servants Ordinance. This Ordinance was promulgated in 1853. Its importance is in the fact that its application affected the contractual rights and obligations of all servants. " The Ordinance applied to all servants in husbandry, sailors and boatmen employed aboard colonial vessels and boats, menial servants (an elastic term), artificers, handicraft-men and labourers. " [137] In addition, this Ordinance (with some amendments), was in force and widely quoted during the first decade of the twentieth century. The Ordinance stipulated a number of penalties against servants in matters relating to attendance, hours of work, and terms of contract, among others. [138] Penalties included loss of earnings, dismissal and even imprisonment.

This legislation, in its oppressive form, is comparable to the '*Masters and Servants Act*' which was passed to regulate labour relations in many territories of the Caribbean. In St.

Kitts, for example, this legislation was passed in 1849 and remained in force until 1922. [139] Richards informs us that the legislation entrenched in law the inequality between workers and employers by making a breach of contract by a worker a criminal offence, while an employer who broke his contract with his employee was only liable to civil action for damages or wages due. Under the Act, employees who withdrew their labour before the termination of a signed or unsigned contract, suffered forfeiture of any wages due, and could be sentenced to imprisonment of up to one month's hard labour or a fine of 50 s. [140]

Planters throughout the region fought to retain the legislation because, in a significant way, it represented a continuation of the tradition of domination and command which they had established during the era of enslavement. Noting the structural similarity between West Indian slave codes and the 'masters and servants legislation' which succeeded them after emancipation, Miles notes: " Both were instruments through which the subjugation of plantation workers to the labour requirements of the plantations were enforced. " [141]

Under these conditions it was only a matter of time before the workers openly resisted and explored ways of improving their condition. The examples in leadership and organisation which were demonstrated by the middle class professionals, became useful models for the revolutionary posture which was increasingly assumed by the wharf and agricultural workers. The influence of East Indian workers was also significant at this stage of the struggle. This was made effective by the increasing number of

workers of this group who completed their period of contract on the estates.

The East Indian Racial Section

During the period 1906-1916, the predominantly East Indian estate workers emerged in the vanguard of workers' demonstrations and agitation. The dissatisfaction on the sugar plantations was widespread. Throughout the East Coast, the East Bank and the West Coast and the West Bank of Demerara, estate workers went on strike.

These incidents were generally in response to conditions of work on specific plantations: dissatisfaction over the price paid for weeding and forking; loss of wages for lateness or absence; and the imposition of fines for numerous infractions. The following are examples of some of the incidents: In December 1908, workers at Pln. Friends, on the East Bank of the Berbice River, stopped work over the "insufficiency of price for supplying and weeding." [142] In January 1908, the indentured immigrants stopped work over inadequate wages at Pln. Wales, West Bank Demerara. In May 1908, about forty women and young men stopped work at Plantation LaBonne Intention, East Coast Demerara, contending that the prices paid for weeding were too low. In August 1909, the workers at Plantation Leonora, West coast Demerara, stopped work over insufficiency in their pay. Finally, in 1911, 1912, and 1913 more stoppages over wages and task work took place at Plantations Lusignan, Uitvlugt, Leonora, Peter's Hall, Diamond, Ruimveldt and Blairmont. [143]

One distinctive feature of these incidents was the tendency for workers to go to Georgetown or the Regional Centre [For West

Coast and West and East Bank Berbice- New Amsterdam. For the West Bank and West Coast Demerara- Vreed-en-Hoop.] to place their grievances before the Immigration Agent. [144] In the absence of an organisation, this official was expected to mediate in labour disputes. In time, however, they soon realised that this official was ineffective in dealing with the growing complexities of the labour situation. This situation became even more uncertain and complex, and, by necessity, moved outside the jurisdiction of the Immigration Agent, when many workers completed their contracts and approached labour as free agents.

At the place of work, they continued to rely on their Work Gangs and Task Gangs in their attempt to present a well co-ordinated approach to labour negotiations. At the social and community level, cultural organisations and the church provided leadership and guidance. Out of this sphere of organisation emerged the British Guiana East Indian Association (BGEIA). [145]

The BGEIA which first emerged in Berbice during 1916, was registered in Georgetown in April 1919 as an organisation with responsibility for the general welfare of the East Indians. Under the Presidency of Francis Kawall, a city businessman, the Association provided much needed representation for East Indian estate workers at a time when this group fell outside the sphere of direct representation by the BGLU.

Apart from representation in labour related issues, the BGEIA assumed the role of a 'friendly or benevolent' organisation for members of the East Indian community. According to Mr. Boodram, a resident of Pln. Providence, East Bank Demerara, the BGEIA was instrumental in co-ordinating social activities and

giving religious instruction to members of the East Indian community. [146]

While these community social based organisations had several limitations in dealing with labour related issues, they played a crucial role in the developing workers' organisations. In addition, their existence is testimony to the workers' consciousness of the need for organisation. In a significant way they represented the workers' initiative at a time when the authorities failed to address this aspect of their lives.

The sugar workers, throughout this period, were familiar with the activities of the more militant and organised dock workers of Georgetown. On their numerous trips to the city, estate workers carefully monitored the activities of the waterfront workers. This process was taken to a higher level when attempts were made to link their struggle with that of the Georgetown waterfront workers. [147] The economic hardship which the workers experienced as a consequence of the First European War, and the exposure of West Indian Servicemen in Europe, influenced the nature of organisation during the post-war period. [148]

Continued Agitation: The Impact of the War

In Guiana, the economic crisis brought on by the war conditions, gave rise to an increase in the number of strikes organised by various category of workers throughout the country. The main source of their disagreement was the steep price increases of essentials in relation to wages. Table II illustrates the decline in the purchasing power of the main West Indian exports between 1914 and 1918:

TABLE II

A Comparison of the Purchasing Power of West Indian Export in Terms of Wheat and Fish, two of the Largest Items of Imports.

	1914	1918		
1 CWT Sugar buys	...0.64	0.41	Barrels of Flour	
1 CWT Cocoa "	...2.6	1.06	"	"
1 Stem Bananas "	...0.11	0.03	"	"
1 Cental Cotton "	...6.02	5.6	"	"
1 CWT Sugar buys61	.46	Quintal Dried Salted Fish	
1 CWT Cocoa "	...2.48	1.18	"	" " "
1 Stem Bananas "	...0.1	0.04	"	" " "
1 Cental Cotton "	...5.73	6.22	"	" " "

Source: Peter Fraser, " Some effects of the First World War on the British West Indies..."

In the country strikes were particularly numerous in 1917. The deplorable conditions, prompted several petitions. Among these was one signed by a number of junior clerks in the Public Service-the civil servants petition of May 1916. [149] They demanded immediate relief in the light of rising prices and the general economic hardship created by the war. The following table indicates how prices had risen by August 1917, in comparison to pre-war rates:

TABLE III

COMMODITY	PRE-WAR	1917
Rice	2 cts. per pint	4cts. per pint
Flour	3 cts. per lb.	5cts. per lb.
Sugar	2 cts. per lb.	4cts. per lb.
Tea	48 cts. per lb.	96cts. per lb.
Salt	1 ct. per lb.	2cts. per lb.
Salt Fish	.06 per lb.	.14 per lb.
Onions	.03 per lb.	.16 per lb.
Lard	.15 per lb.	.36 per lb.
Butter	.36 per lb.	.72 per lb.
Salt Beef	.10 per lb.	.24 per lb.
Potatoes	3 cts. per lb.	11 cts. per lb.
Condensed Milk	.12 per tin	.18 per tin
Matches	.01 per box	.02 per box
Tinned Salmon	.14 per tin	.28 per tin

Source: Ashton Chase, A History of Trade Unionism in Guyana-1900-1961. p.44.

The prices in the table indicate that during the period, the cost of most of the essential items, at least doubled. This was largely due to the fact that most of the items listed above were imported. The following table gives the percentage rise for the most important imports in Guiana between 1914 and 1918:

TABLE IV

IMPORTS	YEARS				
	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918
Cotton Manufactures	100	100	200	200	400
Flour	100	135	131	227	277
Salted Fish	100	116	141	176	229
Chemical Fertiliser	100	108	125	207	262
Beef; Salted	100	94	101	170	229

Source: Fraser, " Some Effects of ..."

During this period, Critchlow, who made his appearance on the labour scene during the workers' disputes of 1905 and 1906, re-emerged in the leadership of the struggle to establish trade unions. In January 1917, he successfully led a delegation which met with the leading employers of the waterfront workers and the Chamber of Commerce. [150] The result of the negotiation, was the granting of a nine hour working day with one for lunch, to several categories of waterfront workers. Previously, it was a ten and a half hour day, with half an hour for lunch. [151] In addition, they obtained overtime payment from 5pm onwards and on Sundays and holidays. Several categories of workers also received wage increases. The main beneficiaries were the stevedores. They received \$1.44 per day for handling cargo on the docks. This was the rate they demanded. [152] The MEN (packers) got 80 cents per day - a small temporary war bonus was merged in the basic day's pay. The BOYS (truckers') wages were increased from 48 cents to 60 cents per day. [153]

The successes of workers on this occasion was of great significance in the history of the labour movement in Guiana. The occasion marked the beginning of collective bargaining. It was the first time delegates representing the workers met representatives of their employers. [154] This was a demonstration that significant gains could be obtained through dialogue and negotiation. In a significant way, also, it was a manifestation of capital's willingness to listen to the demands of labour. These developments were closely monitored by working people throughout the country. It can be said that it was from this stage that the dock workers took centre stage in the

struggle for recognition of workers' organisation. Workers from several areas of the country looked to Critchlow and the waterfront workers for leadership and guidance in their approach to labour issues.

Encouraged by these successes, Critchlow lost no time in mobilising the workers for his campaign for an eight hour day. [155] He submitted a petition to the Chamber of Commerce containing demands for a reduction of the hours in the working day from nine to eight hours. This demand was far too revolutionary for capital and Critchlow was instructed to withdraw the petition under threat of dismissal. Convinced that an eight hour day was the basic right of the workers, he refused. He was promptly dismissed from his job. [156] Given the nature of the society, news of Critchlow's activities soon spread to most of the employers in Georgetown and other areas of the country. His reputation went before him and he became a marked man on the waterfront and in the city of Georgetown. His activities were closely monitored by the police. [157]

Since he was unemployed, Critchlow was able to devote a considerable amount of time towards organising workers' activities. His strategy was to organise a series of demonstrations and protests to press his case. In December 1918, he led a demonstration to Government House, where he conducted discussions with Governor Wilfred Collet. [158] It was during this period that the decision was made to form a trade union.

The British Guiana Labour Union [BGLU]

On the 11th January, 1919, Critchlow launched the BGLU.

[159] The formation of this union was greeted with suspicion, even hostility by the employers. However, the enthusiasm of the workers was too profound to be ignored or taken lightly. Thousands of workers quickly paid their entrance fee and enrolled for membership. At the end of the first year, the Labour Union had about 7,000 members. [160]

An important feature of the union at this early stage, was its attempt to establish itself as a blanket organisation for several categories of workers. Membership was not confined to waterfront workers but included other categories: porters and labourers, tradesmen, sea defence and road workers, railway employees, interior workers such as balata bleeders and miners, factory workers, some government employees and a large complement of sugar estate workers. [161] Several branches of the union were established throughout the country. This policy is an indication of the union's recognition that a progressive workers' organisation should give representation to, and address the issues of as many workers as possible. In all of this, Critchlow was the main source of inspiration.

He was the workers' advocate, exposing their grievances and seeking improvements in their conditions of work and wages. His speeches throughout the country were charged with zeal... He inspired confidence, loyalty and action by his followers. [162]

In a meaningful way the union leadership recognised existing working peoples' organisations and attempted to ensure that the activities of the union, complemented the objectives of these organisations. In this way, the BGLU was able to impact directly upon the social organisation of the Guianese working people. This

aspect of its activities was promoted by the fact that in addition to its role as a trade union, the BGLU was also a Friendly and Burial Society. By providing these functions, it successfully grafted itself on to one of the oldest forms of social organisation which the Guianese masses had evolved for themselves. [163]

A natural response of the union to the prevailing conditions of the period of its formation, was its inclusion of political issues in its agenda. The denial of the franchise, victimisation at the workplace and increasing militancy of the working people, were dominant features of the Guianese reality after 1900. These factor, reflected the growing conflict between capital and labour. The People's Association which addressed political issues, declined after the general elections of 1916. [164] The emergence of the BGLU was thus very timely in fulfilling the need for political leadership.

The BGLU, from its inception, recognised that the working people were not organised in any mass movement and sought to correct this situation. The union's first set of rules made provision for a Political Fund. Its minimum Political Programme included such objectives as provision of work for all unemployed persons, state pensions and adult suffrage. Further objectives included nationalisation of railways, of land and of the entire means of production, distribution and exchanged. [165] The union was deeply involved in popular politics, and often joined middle class political leaders and even organised campaigns of its own around popular issues. The anti-colonisation campaign [166] was foremost on the union's agenda. Critchlow mobilised the

waterfront workers against the scheme. The union led the successful campaign which resulted in the RENT RESTRICTION BILL. [167] - but at the expense of wage reduction in 1922. [168] From 1919, the BGLU orchestrated the most determined struggle for working peoples' development in the Guianese society. [169] It is in this tradition that the Ruimveldt Incident of 1924 was launched.

The BGLU's militancy contributed much to the political consciousness of the Guianese masses. Critchlow and his colleagues clearly recognised the petite bourgeoisie as the worst enemy of the Guianese workers. They also criticised the role of the British Governor, some section of the press, and big business in oppressing the masses. They stressed the class nature of the conflict between workers and employers, and preached against a racial interpretation of the struggle. The BGLU in collaboration with the BGEIA, also contributed to the political culture by continuing and deepening the tradition of street corner meetings. [170]

Struggle for Recognition

Although the union was officially launched in 1919, for several years the members and leadership, had to struggle to have the organisation registered. Numerous attempts were resisted by the government and employers. The Trade Union Bill was not presented to the Guiana Court of Policy until May, 1921. In spite of this many planters refused to negotiate with labour leaders and regarded the activities of the unions as illegal.

During the late 1920s and 30s, however, the union movement received valuable assistance from individuals and groups from the

United Kingdom. Prominent among these institutions, was the **FABIAN SOCIETY**. The Fabians were an influential group of intellectuals whose writings and agitation helped to change the nature of left-wing radicalism in Britain. [171] Socialist in their outlook and orientation, the Fabians advocate a " reformist alternative " to the growing Marxist trend in Britain during the period. [172] They proposed a gradual implementation of a planned economy, public ownership of land and industry, and the abolition of poverty by enforced minimum standards. [173] This organisation, through its West Indian connections, made a contribution to the legalisation of trade union in the region. [174]

Greater momentum was also given to the working people's movement as a result of new developments which took place in the relationship between the African and East Indian racial sections. Much of this development was made possible by a change in the residential arrangements of a large section of members of the East Indian community. This development contributed to greater co-operation among members of these communities. Aiding in this process also, were the activities of a number of prominent individuals who emerged to champion working people's issues. The activities of the workers and the relationships which were developed during this period had significant implications for the Ruimveldt Incident.

New Direction in Race Relations and the Background to the Ruimveldt Workers' Incident

Beginning in the early years of the 20th century, relations between the African and East Indian racial sections assumed a

posture of co-operation and collaboration rather than the hitherto conflict of interest and suspicion which surfaced in working people's relationship. This was seen in their collective response to capital at the point of production. [175] There were also areas of interaction in the social sphere with striking results. Firstly, the behaviour of Indian immigrant workers was influenced by 'creole' African practices in areas as significant as funerary customs and other forms of cultural practices. [176]

By virtue of the length of residency and (increasingly from the late 19th century onward) by virtue of birth in Guiana, free Indians were becoming increasingly *creolised*. The Reverend Bronkhurst recognised the young East Indians to be a new generation of Hindu-Guianese [177] " Curiously he chastised the Afro-Guianese [178] for participating enthusiastically in the Indian Tadjah ceremonies and for independently celebrating their own Tadjahs. " [179]

After 1900, a number of East Indian settlements emerged in the newly opened riverain crown lands, especially in the Mahaica-Mahaicony-Abary and secondary areas along the Corentyne and Berbice rivers. [180] The government was also active in subdividing other properties which it had acquired on the East Coast of Demerara, the Canal Polder, [181] and the West Bank of Demerara which specialised in the growing of ground provisions for the market. [182]

The main economic activity of the East Indians in these communities was rice cultivation. The demand for this grain locally and regionally was a major motivative force for the new settlers. " Between 1911 and 1921, there were further departures

from the estates as the rice industry continued to expand under the stimulus of the *First European War* and as the demand for exports of rice to neighbouring Caribbean territories grew."

[183]

These new settlements brought East Indian and African communities into close proximity. This development (although the source of tension and suspicion initially [184]) contributed to a higher level of understanding and tolerance among members of the racial sections. In this way, many of the stereotypes which were promoted by the planters, were seen for what they were—a deliberate attempt to divide the working people.

The evidence show that once the East Indian workers were free of the restrictions—physical and legal—of the plantation, their struggle was not dissimilar to that of the African workers. Rodney noted that when East Indians left the estates—residentially or occupationally— they carried with them the mark of the plantation, as did their creole African forerunners. [185] Planters have been known to express concern over the fact ex-indentured Indians were behaving as emancipated Africans had previously behaved. [186]

For the first time members of the major racial sections were able to openly express their disapproval with the state of working people's development without fear of prosecution or persecution at the work place. Superficial social and ethnic differentials were overlooked for the grander goal of the prosperity of the workers and the country as a whole.

By 1924 the new generation of East Indians regarded Guiana as home and committed themselves to the task of improving the

quality of life in the country of their birth. To achieve this objective, it was necessary for all the citizens to take an active part in the process. Exploitation at the place of work and exclusion from the political process were major obstacles to be overcome. The main representatives of working people (the BGLU and the BGEIA) were aware of this task and recognised co-operation and partnership among the various sections of the working people as important elements towards people's empowerment.

The Influence of Caribbean and African Politics

Emerging from the ranks of the workers and other sectors of the society were several individuals who were highly motivated by the desire to contribute to the development of the people of the Caribbean and African peoples throughout the world. The activities of these personalities aided in the reinforcement of this new nationalism and heightened consciousness among the working people. Among the most outstanding of these personalities was Marcus Garvey. Garvey's message appealed to workers loyalty and stressed the long history and achievements of people of colour. This appeal assisted in reinforcing the mood for change through community service and agitation.

By the mid 1920s there were about seven branches of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in Guiana located in several parts of the city and the country districts. [187] Guiana also emerged as an important regional outpost for the UNIA. This was largely because of the leading role the country assumed in trade union activities within the region. The UNIA was able to assist in the organisation of numerous public

meetings which were called by the BGLU. The Negro World, the organisation's newspaper organ, was also instrumental in working people's demonstration. Evidence of this can be seen in the support given by the UNIA in the campaign against the introduction of a series of *Seditious Publications Ordinances*.

[188]

In Guiana, the UNIA emerged as the natural ally of the local labour movement. [189] Critchlow and other members of the BGLU attended and addressed UNIA functions. At a UNIA sponsored meeting in July 1921, Critchlow spoke on the theme *unity* and heartily endorsed the objectives of the Association. [190] The BGLU and the UNIA complemented the activities of each other in their quest for the improvement of the lot of the workers.

Garvey's message embraced industry and selfworth. His work within and outside the Caribbean placed him in a unique position to foster links and spread ideas among working peoples on several continents. He was aware of the treatment of black servicemen by white soldiers during the First European War, and the exploitation of West Indian workers in Panama and North America. [191]

During the 1920s, Garvey spoke for and agitated on behalf of people linked by racial affinity and linked as well by a common experience of racial and economic oppression, only varying qualitatively in different parts of the world. Garveyism, therefore represented a liberation movement in that it rejected colonial oppression and exploitation, actively sought to reclaim lands and economic resources, and fought against the cumulative disinheritance of millions of Africans both within and outside

of the African continent. [192]

Garvey's message was rapidly embraced by the working people of the region. His teaching caused them to become increasingly more aware of their own exploitation and fired them with renewed determination to join forces in their struggle against oppression. According to Martin: " In a region where working class status mostly went hand in hand with victimization through racial discrimination, Garvey's impact on the nascent Caribbean Labour Movement was profound. " [193]

These developments were crucial in providing the organisational structure which directed the workers' approach to the rapidly declining conditions on the estates and docks. Low wages, unemployment and underemployment, and a steep increase in the cost of living were major issues which caused the workers to emerge in a popular demonstration in 1924.

Unemployment and Estate Conditions

During 1920 and 1921, workers were systematically laid off. By 1921, the normal labour force had been reduced by 40% and workers received notice of a further 20% wage reduction. [194] The explanation given by the employers was a fall in the price of exports.

The following tables give an indication of: (i) wages paid and increases demanded by several categories of dock workers in 1924; (ii) wages of several categories of workers during 1922; and (iii) average retail prices of all the chief staple articles of use or consumption for the year 1922:

TABLE V

	Wage	Increase Demanded
Stevedore Labourers.....	\$1.60	\$2.00 (per day)
Wharf Men (packers).....	\$1.12	\$1.44 (" ")
Wharf Boys (truckers)....	84 cts.	\$1.20 (" ")

Source: Ashton Chase, A History of Trade Unionism in Guyana...
pp. 66-67.

TABLE VI

Occupation	Per Annum	Per Day	Per Task or Job
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Agriculture

Cane Cutters..		2s to 2/6	
Shovel Men....		2s to 2/8	
Weeders.....		1"/4 to 2/-	
Suppliers.....		2" to 2/6	
Puntmen.....		2/8	
Porters.....		2/8	
Mule Boys.....		2"/4 to 3/-	

Domestic

Male.....	£27 10s to £35	} Monthly Paid
Female.....	£15 to £25	
Chauffeur....	£60 to £70	

Trades Men

Carpenters..	5s to 7/-	}The work is ordinarily by task, but these sums are what men can usually earn in a day
Masons.....	8"/4 to 12/-	
Smiths.....	8"/- to 10/-	
Coopers.....	6"/3 to 8/-	
Boat Builders.	6"/- to 8/4	
Painters.....	5"/- to 6/-	

Wharf Labourers

Regular (Men)..	4s/2	}Paid Weekly
Regular (Boys).	3"/3	
Casual (Men)...	4"/8	
Casual (Boys)..	3"/6	
Stevedores.....	6"/8	

* 10 and a half pence overtime between 4 and 6 o'clock; half time between 6 and 7 o'clock, and double time rate after 7pm.

Source: P.R.O: C.O. 116/291 Blue Book 1922.

TABLE VII

<u>COMMODITY</u>	<u>AVERAGE RETAIL PRICE (STERLING)</u>			<u>MAXIMUM RETAIL PRICE</u>			<u>MINIMUM RETAIL PRICE</u>		
	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d
Wheaten Flour (per barrel).....	1	18	6	2	5	0	1	16	0
Wheat (bushel)....	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bread (per lb.)...	0	0	6	0	0	6	0	0	6
Horned Cattle (per lb. live)....	0	0	2 3/4	0	0	3	0	0	2 3/4
Horses (local)....	30	0	0	45	0	0	20	0	0
Sheep (per lb. alive).....	0	0	6	0	0	6	0	0	0
Goats (lb. alive)	0	0	4	0	0	5	0	0	4
Swine (lb. alive)	0	0	4	0	0	5	0	0	4
Milk (per imp. pt.)	0	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	3 1/2
Butter/Fresh-lb...	0	2	8	0	0	4	0	2	8
Butter/Salt-lb....	0	2	0	0	2	4	0	1	4
Cheese (per lb.)..	0	1	4	0	2	0	0	1	3
Eggs (per doz.)...	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	2	0
Beef (per lb.)....	0	0	6	0	0	7	0	0	6
Mutton (per lb.)..	0	1	6	0	1	6	0	1	6
Pork (per lb.)....	0	0	10	0	1	0	0	0	10
Rice (per gal.)...	0	1	4	0	2	0	0	1	1
Coffee (per lb.)..	0	0	5	0	0	6	0	0	5
Cocoa " ".....	0	1	0	0	1	6	0	0	11
Tea " ".....	0	2	6	0	4	0	0	2	4
Sugar " ".....	0	0	2 1/2	0	0	2 1/2	0	0	2 1/2
Salt " ".....	0	0	1 1/2	0	0	1 1/2	0	0	1 1/2
Wine (per qwt.)...	0	2	0	0	2	4	0	1	8
Brandy " ".....	0	8	4	0	12	0	0	5	4
Beer (per pt.)....	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	10
Tobacco (per lb.)	0	15	0	0	17	0	0	15	0
Kerosene (per qt.)	0	0	5	0	0	6	0	0	5
Common soap (cakes)	0	0	1 1/2	0	0	2	0	0	1 1/2

Source: P.R.O: C.O.111/291 Blue Book 1922.

Because of low wages, workers were unable to meet the cost of their living expenses. Many were forced to live at a mere subsistence level and occupied dwellings which were overcrowded and lacked the necessary sanitary and other facilities. According to a Commission of Enquiry, [195] the average cost of weekly

necessity for a stevedore and family of five, amounted to approximately \$6.16, (this estimate does not include house rent and the cost of entertainment).

The Commission's findings, noted that at the existing rate of wages in 1924, a stevedore would have spent close to two thirds of his earnings to meet the cost of necessities. [196] The situation reached such a critical point that during the early months of 1924 the union agitated against the scourge of unemployment and urged relief. [197] Several largely attended unemployment meetings were held throughout the country during the morning hours to impress the gravity of the situation upon the Governor and the Chamber of Commerce.

By 1924 also, very few fundamental changes were made in labour relations in Guiana. The employers retrenched workers at their own convenience and they refused to recognise the workers call for a minimum wage. Throughout, the government maintained a callous attitude to the workers' plight. Workers in several districts of the country were affected and they looked to their leaders for guidance and a solution to their plight.

In a significant way, the estate workers on the East Bank and the dock workers of the city were tied to the sugar industry and had very little opportunity for employment in other economies. [198] Therefore the need to demonstrate for better wages, employment and improved working condition, was equally strong among workers on the estates and those on the docks.

The BGEIA and the BGLU provided leadership and, through regular meetings, educated workers about the nature of their plight. Further, the refusal of the authorities to enter upon

serious negotiations with the elected representatives of labour, clearly demonstrated to the workers that they had to take a greater initiative to draw attention to their issues. A major part of this initiative was the organisation of popular strikes and demonstrations by workers throughout the country. The workers incident at Ruimveldt which occurred during this period is the main concern of the next chapter.

FOOTNOTES

1. The Middle Class had its origins among the working people of the land. Its differentiation from the masses of the population was the result of several developments within the non-plantation sector of the economy. These included the acquisition of academic and professional qualifications, especially among Africans and Creoles, see K. Nehusi, " *The Development of Political Organisation and Political Consciousness in British Guiana, 1870-1964: The conscientizacao of the Middle Class and Masses.*" Ph.D. Dissertation, University College London 1989. p. 40. For a study of this group, see also Walter Rodney, *A History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881-1905.* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1981.) pp. 90-119, also footnote 4 of chapter i.

2. K. Nehusi, " *Approaches to the Formation of Trade Unions and their Impact on Social and Political Development in Guiana, 1900-1940.*" Paper Presented at the Fourteenth Annual Conference of the Society for Caribbean Studies, July, 10-12, 1990. Hoddenson Hertfordshire.

3. Ibid.

4. See C.L.R. James on the Middle Class in *Party Politics in the West Indies.* (San Juan Trinidad: Vedic Enterprises, 1962.) pp. 130-139.

5. Walter Rodney, " *From Niggeryard to Village.*" Reproduced from " *The Rural Transformation Collective, Diamond Village, St. Vincent and the Grenadines.*" in *Reform: A Caribbean Journal of Rural Development.* October, 1987.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Woodville K. Marshall, " *'We be wise to many more things': Blacks' Hopes and Expectations of Emancipation.*" in Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd (eds.) *Caribbean Freedom: Economy and Society from Emancipation to the Present.* (Kingston [Jamaica] and London: James Currey Publishers, 1993.) p. 17.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., slavery as a legal state was abolished in the British Empire by an Act which became law in 1833, but it did not come into effect until August 1834, and the enslaved Africans were not immediately freed. Those over six years were to serve as unpaid 'apprentices' for three-quarters of each working day, for the remaining quarter, they were free to work for wages. See also Alan Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves: The Political Economy of British Guiana 1838-1904. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972.) p. 31, also Glen Richards, "The Pursuit of 'Higher Wages' and 'Perfect Personal Freedom' St Kitts-Nevis 1836-1956." in Mary Turner (ed.) From Chattel Slavery to Wage Slaves: The Dynamics of Labour Bargaining in the Americas. (London: James Currey, 1995.) 275-301.

13. Marshall, " 'We be wise...' " p. 17.

14. Ibid.

15. At times, because of the presence of weeds and adverse wether condition, cane cutting was made very difficult. For example wet and slippery conditions made it difficult for cane cutters to transport 'cane bundles' from the 'beds' to the 'punts.'

16. Workers demanded more money for 'cutting and fetching' (usually from the fields to the waiting 'punts') than 'cutting and dropping' in the fields.

17. Rodney, A History of... p. 160.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., quoted in 'Court of Review' 1880.

21. Ibid., quoted in Overseer's Manual. Setting fire to the cane plants was also a tactic which was employed. According to George Rude, " Arson...is a well established weapon in agrarian disputes." see George Rude, The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbance in France and England, 1730-1898. (London: 1981.) p. 241.

22. Ibid., p. 162.

23. H.V. Bronkhurst, Among the Hindus and Creoles in British Guiana. (London: 1888.) p. 301.

24. Rodney, A History... p. 163.

25. Bronkhurst, Among the Hindus... p. 301, also *ibid.*, p. 163.

26. H.A. Clegg, Alan Fox and A.F. Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions Since 1889. Vol.1 1889-1910. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press.) p. 6.

27. These societies ensured that certain standards were maintained within the professions by offering unemployment relief to workers in a bid to prevent them from accepting rates of pay below the level set by the trade, see *ibid.*
28. Clegg et. al. A History of... p. 6.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*
32. 'In the industrial life of England there is perhaps no point so tender as the idea of being buried by the parish. A pauper's grave and funeral are more repugnant to the sensibilities of the working class than any other social degradation.' see *ibid.*
33. Clegg et. al. A History... p. 7.
34. *Ibid.*
35. Liberal July 16, 1891. The members were dressed in uniforms and carried decorated banners.
36. N.E. Cameron, The Evolution of the Negro. 2 Vols. (Georgetown: 1929-34.) pp. 2-18.
37. Richard Hart, " *Origin and Development of the Working Class in the English-Speaking Caribbean Area 1897-1937.*" in Malcolm Cross and Gad Heuman (eds.) [University of Warwick Caribbean Studies] Labour in the Caribbean from Emancipation to Independence. (London: Macmillan Caribbean, 1988.) p. 45, see also Rodney, A History of... p. 163.
38. Glen Richards, " *The Pursuit of 'Higher Wages' and 'Perfect Personal Freedom': St Kitts-Nevis 1836-1956.*" in Mary Turner (ed.) From Chattel Slavery to Wage Slaves: The Dynamics of Labour Bargaining in the Americas. (London: James Currey Ltd., 1995.) p. 285.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 286, quoted in C.O.152/356. Public Address by Frederick Solomon. February 4, 1917, Enc. Best to Long, August 1917.
40. Nehusi, " *The Development of Political Organisation...*" p. 106, also the Chronicle September 6 and 11, 1901.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*
43. Demerara Times May 26, 1875.
44. *Ibid.*

45. Chronicle September 6 and 11, 1901.

46. Letter of N. Darnell Davis, Government Secretary to Hunter, September 28, 1901 in Chronicle October 31, 1901.

47. Teachers Guide October 1901 as quoted in Argosy October 26, 1901, also Nehusi, " *The Development of Political Organisation...*" p. 107. The Reform Movement was launched (from as early as the 1880s) to break the legislative monopoly of the planters over the economic benefits of the years of relative prosperity in the colony. The first organisational expression of this movement was the birth of the 'Political Reform Club' in 1887. See also Rodney, A History... pp. 140-150.

48. Ibid.

49. Rodney, A History... p. 171.

50. Marshall, " *We be wise to many more things.*" p. 15. Ancestor worship is a significant part of West African religion which was brought to the Americas. This belief system is centred on the concept of the ever-present watchful eyes of the 'ancestors' over the affairs of the community. Among the Ashanti the warrior ancestors had an important place in religious ceremonies and the 'stool' had a central role. Duppies are said to be 'selfish, malicious and vindictive' spirits that haunt the neighbourhood where they used to live while alive. See Orlando Patterson, The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica. (Kingston: Granada Publishing Ltd., 1973) pp. 198-199 and 202-203.

51. Marshall, " *We be wise...*" p. 15.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. The term Obeah or Obei is sometimes used in the generic sense to designate all forms of supernatural beliefs and practices among Africans in the Caribbean. There has been some controversy regarding the etymology of the word. However the Twi word Obei, meaning witchcraft, is close, in pronunciation to the Caribbean usage. See Patterson, pp. 185-186, also M.J. Field, Religion and Medicines of the Ga People. pp. 124-125. Myalism involves a kind of 'society' or 'cult,' centred on a special dance. Initiates were supposedly invulnerable to white men, and the leader of the cult had the power to restore life, see E. Long, History of Jamaica Bk. 4, p. 417.

55. Representatives of several Nonconformist Missionary Bodies such as the London Missionary Society (LMS), the Baptist and the Moravians, were sent out to the Caribbean region to aid in the 'moral and religious' development of the Africans during the early decades of the nineteenth century. As early as 1808, on the initiative of Hermanus H. Post, a planter in Guiana, invited the Reverend John Wray of the London Missionary Society to set up the first 'slave' mission in the colony. It was not until the 1820s however, that missionaries were sent out on a regular basis to the colony. See Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves... p. 29, also R. Lovett, The History of the London Missionary Society, 1795-1895. London, 1899.

56. Marshall, " *We be wise to many more things'...*" p. 16.

57. Ibid., in Guiana the Rev. John Smith of the LMS was blamed by the planters for the revolt in Demerara during 1823. In Jamaica, planters saw a direct relationship between the teachings of the Baptist Missionaries and the decision of Sam Sharpe (one of the most outstanding leaders of the 1831 rebellion on that island) to take up arms against the whites. See Michael Craton, Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies. (Ithaca and London: 1982.)

58. Marshall, " *We be wise...*" p. 16.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

63. Chase, A History of... pp. 17-18.

64. Ibid.

65. As early as the 1850s, the Engineers were in the vanguard of a movement in which regional branches of unions were amalgamated into 'new model unions' aiming at national. (This national appeal was obviously attractive to Rev. Frank.) See Clegg et. al. A History of British Trade Unions... p. 7.

66. Ibid., by the early 20th century the Engineers and the Carpenters and Joiners were the most characteristic of the 'new model unions.' These workers outdistanced all other craft organisations both in numbers and resources, and they did so by perfecting a system of national benefit insurance combined with the local control of wages and conditions which had been only imperfectly realised before.

67. Chase, A History of... pp. 17-18.

68. Ibid., also Daily Chronicle January 18, 1917.

69. Ibid., p. 18.

70. Rodney, A History... p. 171.

71. Ibid., for the Governor's confidential report on Shirley, see [PRO] C.O.111/522, Confidential 39787 November 16, 1900.

72. Ibid., see Chronicle December 16, 1865.

73. Ibid.

74. Chronicle December 6, 1865.

75. In Guiana this group comprised of all the working people involved in the production of sugar on the estates and also in the service sector in Georgetown. This group was also responsible for the creation and maintenance of the structures (drainage and irrigation systems and sea defence network) which were indispensable to the habitation of the Coastal Region of the country where the major industry and population centres were located.

76. Rodney, A History of... p. 172, quoted in the Chronicle October 24, 1901.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid.

79. Nehusi, " *The People's Association (1903-1921) In the Evolution of Popular Politics in Guyana.*" Paper Presented at a Postgraduate Seminar. University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies. See also Berbice Gazette October 24, 1900.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.

82. For example, the income qualification for the franchise was reduced to \$48, see M. Shahabuddeen, Constitutional Development in Guiana 1921-1978. (Georgetown: Guyana Printers Ltd., 1978.) p. 393.

83. Ibid., p. 407.

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid., p. 457, see also chapter iii.

86. Liberal July 16, 1891.

87. Rodney, A History... p. 170.

88. See Nehusi, " *The People's Association...*"

89. Richard Hart, "Aspects of Early Caribbean Workers' Struggle." Caribbean Studies Vol. 1 (University of London: Collected Seminar Papers No. 29, 1982.) p. 35.
90. Brinsley Samaroo, "The Trinidad Workingmen's Association and the Origin of Popular Protest in a Crown Colony." Social and Economic Studies Vol. 21 No. 2 (June 1972.)
91. Nehusi, "Approaches to the Formation of Trade Unions..." Quoted in Letters of J.E. Denny in Daily Chronicle December 7, 1889.
92. Ibid.
93. This was the 1905 Workers' Protest. For details of this protest see chapter v, also F. Drakes [K. Nehusi] "The 1905 Protest in British Guiana: Cause, Course and Consequences," (University of Guyana: Unpublished MA Thesis, 1981) and Rodney, A History of... chapter 8.
94. Chase, A History... p. 17.
95. Ibid., pp. 17-18.
96. This position was brought out in the Governor's action during the workers' incidents in 1905 and 1924, see for example, Chase, A History of... and [PRO] C.O.111/652 Thomas to SS, April 30, 1924.
97. J.A. Banks, Trade Unionism. (London: Collier-Macmillan Publisher Ltd., 1974.) p. 105.
98. Chase, A History of... pp. 50-53. 'Financial Members' were members of the union who had their dues fully paid for a specific financial year or term.
99. W. Arthur Lewis, Labour in the West Indies: The Birth of a Workers' Movement. (London: New Beacon Books, 1977) also, R. Greenwood and S. Hamber, Development and Decolonisation. Bk. 3. (London: Macmillan Education Limited, 1982.) p. 30.
100. Royal Gazette January 15, 1887.
101. Daily Chronicle August 16, 1887.
102. Rodney, A History... p. 163.
103. Nehusi, "The People's Association..."
104. Ibid.
105. The Combined Court consisted of Financial Representatives and Members of the Court of Policy. Some members were elected on the very restrictive franchise, but the government had an in-built majority. See chapter iii.

106. Nehusi, " *The People's Association...*" p. 2.
107. Daily Chronicle September 10, 1916.
108. Nehusi, " *The People's Association...*" p. 2.
109. Ibid.
110. See Biographical Notes on Alfred Athiel Thorne in TUC File: MSS 292/972. 8/1, also Appendix II.
111. Rodney, A History... p. 204.
112. Ibid.
113. Ibid., also Biographical notes on Patrick Dargan in Appendix II.
114. See Nehusi, " *The People's Association...*" p. 3.
115. See Appendix II, also, Chase, A History of...
116. See K. Nehusi, " *The 1905 Protest in Guyana: Causes, Course and Consequences.*" Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Guyana, 1981.
117. Ibid.
118. Ibid., also Rodney, A History...
119. Rodney, A History... (see chapter 8.)
120. See Chase, A History of... also Appendix II.
121. This organisation was in the vanguard of the struggle against the 'colonisation scheme.' See Enclosure 1,2,3 and 4 "Memorandum of Reasoned Statement: " submitted by the NPC in PRO: C.O.111/652, April 9, 1924.
122. Nehusi, " *The People's Association...*" *Other issues on the Association's agenda included a campaign for an end to state-aided immigration; a fair system of taxation; and the creation of an independent and prosperous peasantry.*
123. See footnote 47.
124. For example, S.A. Robertson President, and H.A. Britton, General Secretary, " *The People's Association (Pro Salute Populi)*" February 1906:; Daily Chronicle February 10, 1906, also PRO: Enclosure No. 2 in C.O.111/553 Hodgson to Elgin, No. 400 December 7, 1906.
125. PRO: Blue Books 1901-1921.

126. This situation was largely due to the price increases brought on by the war and the experience of West Indian servicemen overseas. See Peter Fraser, "Some Effects of the First World War on the British West Indies." Caribbean Studies Vol. 1, also Richard Hart, "Aspects of Early Caribbean Workers' Struggle."
127. Evidence of J.P. Santos (owner of a large merchant firm) before the Service Salaries Commission. Chronicle October 23, 1919.
128. Letter of 'A Hard Time' Chronicle October 12, 1916.
129. Chase, A History of... p. 28.
130. Ibid.
131. For example the law provided for the employment of indentured immigrants by the task and by the day. The duration of work was prescribed as seven hours in the fields and ten hours in the factory every day except Sundays and authorised holidays, see *ibid.*
132. Ibid.
133. Chronicle November 12, 1903.
134. Chase, p. 28.
135. The law prescribed a minimum rate of twenty four cents per day for time work for an ablebodied adult male immigrant, and not less than sixteen cents per day for similar workers if they were other than able bodied. Magistrates had the authority to fix wages which were also influenced by prevailing rates on neighbouring plantations. See Chase, A History of... p. 29. Planters usually reduce wage rates in response to a fall in the price of sugar or as a result of a decline in production due to unfavourable weather conditions, see Richards, "Higher Wages..."
136. Chase, A History of... pp. 30-31.
137. Ibid., pp. 33-34.
138. Ibid., p. 34.
139. Richards, "Higher Wages..." p. 280. The Act was modeled upon contemporary English legislation which regulated relations between employers and workers, particularly the statute of 1823, 4 Geo. iv c. 34. For a detailed account of the evolution of Masters and Servants legislation in England, see Daphne Simon, "Master and Servant." in John Saville (ed.) Democracy and the Labour Movement. (London: 1954.) 160-200.
140. Richards, "Higher Wages..." p. 280.

141. Ibid., quoted in Robert Miles, Capitalism and Unfree Labour: Anomaly or Necessity. (London: 1987.) p. 182.

142. Chase, A History... p. 39.

143. Ibid.

144. This was the usual practice in the period when there was no other form of labour representation for this category of workers. The Immigration Agent was expected to mediate in labour and other disputes involving the East Indian labourers and the estate authorities.

145. This organisation was first established in Berbice in 1916. In April 1919, it assumed national importance. Its main objective was to look into the general welfare of the East Indians throughout the country and maintain social and cultural links with India.

146. See Private Interview with Mr. Boodram of Providence, at Pln. Diamond in December, 1987.

147. See chapter v.

148. Many West Indians who served in the military during the war years, experienced British racism in the trenches and in civilian life after the hostilities. Servicemen returned to the region and took an active role in the anti-colonial movement.

149. Chase, A History... p. 44.

150. Ibid.

151. Ibid., pp. 49-50.

152. Ibid.

153. Ibid.

154. Ibid.

155. Ibid., p. 49.

156. It was common for the authorities to have union officials and other leaders of the people followed by the police. See for example the Police Report on the activities of Reverend Smith in PRO: C.O.111/686 File No. 75068, 4 February, 1930.

157. The Governor insisted that a police officer monitored Critchlow's activities, especially his speeches and public appearances.

158. Governor Collet met a small deputation for a meeting. (It was after this meeting that Critchlow came up with the idea of establishing a labour union,) see Chase, p. 50.

159. Ibid.

160. The BGLU was the first workers' organisation in the region to emerge as a fully constituted trade union. See *ibid* for membership statistics.

161. Ibid.

162. Ibid., pp. 50-51.

163. Nehusi, " *The People's Association...*" pp. 6-8.

164. Nehusi, " *Approaches...*"

165. During the 1920s there was an active campaign against the government's attempt to import labourers from the Indian sub-continent, see for example footnote 121.

166. This campaign was directed at the planters' policy of introducing labourers from the Asian sub-continent at a time when the workers in the country were experiencing high unemployment. In addition, organisations such as the NPC, advocated that the government explored the possibility of importing workers from islands of the Caribbean. See PRO: C.O.111/ 652, April 9, 1924.

167. This was a legislation designed to assist workers in meeting the increasing cost of house rent. Passed in 1922, it attempted to adjust house rents from \$60.00 per month downward.

168. Chase, A History of... pp. 64.

169. Ibid., pp. 64-65.

170. New Daily Chronicle January 10, 1933.

171. PRO: File 94/1933. Colonial Secretary's Office " Reports of Activities of the BGLU, " January 4, 1933. Conf.

172. Lewis, Labour in the West Indies... p. 59.

173. Ibid.

174. For example during the 1930s, Arthur Lewis used his influence in the Society to bring West Indian labour issues to the attention of the British authorities. See *ibid*. p. 59.

175. Rodney, A History... p. 179.

176. H.V. Bronkurst, The Colony of British Guiana and its Labouring Population. (London: 1883) pp. 359-365. See also D. Comins, Note on Emigration from India and British Guiana. (Calcutta: 1893) p. 80, and the Argosy, December 11, 1880.

177. Bronkurst, The Colony of British Guiana... pp. 359--365.

178. Ibid.

179. Ibid

180. Lesley M. Potter, " *The Post Indenture Experience of East Indians in Guiana, 1873-1921*" in Brereton and Dookeran (eds.) East Indians in the Caribbean: Colonialism and the Struggle for Identity. (Papers Presented at a Symposium on East Indians in the Caribbean, University of the West Indies) (New York: Kraus International Publications, 1982) p. 86.

181. Ibid., Polder: a system of canals, kokers and dams which were erected to in order to reclaim wetlands and swamps for agricultural projects.

182. Ibid.

183. Ibid., p. 83.

184. For example when the East Indian settlement was established at *Huis T'Dieren* on the Essequibo Coast, eighteen Africans with leases on the land were ejected because 'the East Indians did not want to live in close proximity to blacks.' See Rodney, A History... p. 184.

185. Ibid.

186. Ibid.

187. Tony Martin, " *Marcus Garvey the Great Emancipator: Notes on the Universal Negro Improvement Association in Guiana.*" Paper Presented at the International Conference: Genesis of a Nation II, Pegasus Hotel, Georgetown Guyana. By the mid 1920s there were seven branches of the UNIA situated in *Charlestown, Laceytown (in Georgetown) and Vergenogeen, Parika and Pomeroun (rural communities)*).

188. In September 1919, on the recommendation of the Colonial Secretary, the British Guiana government introduces a 'Seditious Publications Bill. According to this Bill, anyone possessing seditious reading material was liable to penal servitude for life. The Bill was directed at the Negro World, Crusader, Monitor, and the Rector along with similar Afro-American papers.

189. Martin, " *Marcus Garvey...*" p. 15.

190. Ibid., also B. Samaroo, " *The Trinidad Workingmen's Association.*" in Social and Economic Studies XXI (2nd. June 1972.) p. 217.

191. Martin, p. 6, also Negro World, July 25, 1925.

192. Rupert Lewis, Marcus Garvey: Anti-Colonial Champion (London: Karia Press, 1987) p. 126.

193. Martin, " *Marcus Garvey...*" p. 8.

194. Daily Chronicle, June 21, 1921.

195. Minutes of the Eight Meeting of the Commission Appointed to Enquire Into and Report on the Conditions of Employment and Rates of Wages Paid to Stevedores, Wharfmen and Labourers Engaged in the Loading and Unloading of Vessels. Held in the Court of Policy, Wednesday April 23, 1924. [It should be noted that many wharf workers were out of work for long periods during the year. Shipping firms were only able to provide work for labourers on an average throughout the year of from two to four days a week, according to the number of ships arriving in port.

196. Ibid.

197. This took the form of several meetings and 'unemployment demonstrations.' The majority of these meetings were held during the morning hours in order to convey the serious plight of the workers.

198. In Georgetown, most of the jobs available were centred around the docks-loading and shipping sugar and its by-products, and unloading merchandise from overseas. These activities were controlled by the sugar interest. On the East Bank, there was virtually no industry apart from those relating to sugar. In addition, the plantations monopolised most of the fertile land in the area which made it difficult for the development of a successful peasantry.

CHAPTER V

The Ruimveldt Workers' Incident: Resistance Through
Co-operation Among Members of the Dominant Racial Sections
of the Working People

...From such crude unsuspected sources shall spring
a flood of change, not from a house of bricks
but from one of thatch, earth and cowshit.

Sly Lowhar-`Shanty Town' in Andrew Salkey, Georgetown
Journal (London and Port-of-Spain: New Beacon Books
Ltd., 1972.) p. 46.

This chapter is a review of the main events of the workers' incident as they occurred in Georgetown and along the East Bank of Demerara. The main emphasis is on the workers' strike and demonstration in Georgetown which developed into the invasion of property and an assault on individuals in several sections of the city. This is followed by an account of the march to the city by estate workers from several plantations on the East Bank.

These events, which took place between late March and early April 1924, [1] occurred in two stages. The first stage began on Monday March 31, which was a strike by wharf workers and stevedores in Georgetown. The second stage unfolded on Wednesday April 2 and involved Africans and East Indian estate workers from the main sugar plantations along the East Bank.

On Thursday April 3, a large group of estate workers from the East Bank embarked upon a march to Georgetown. They were stopped at River View bridge, at Pln. Ruimveldt, [2] and dispersed when shots were fired into the crowd. This incident resulted in the death of thirteen workers. [3]

The events occurred in the following order between March 31 and April 3, 1924:

Georgetown

Monday March 31- Wharf workers and Stevedores went on strike in response to a call by the BGLU

Tuesday April 1- The second day of the strike which was marked by a mammoth labour demonstration in the city. Several hundred estate workers joined

Wednesday April 2- The Governor called a meeting with officials of the Chamber of Commerce and Critchlow of the BGLU

Thursday April 3, 8:30 am- Governor Thomson hosted conference involving the representatives of the employers, the Chamber of Commerce and labour

Events on the East Bank

Wednesday April 2- Estate workers requested a meeting with the Manager of Pln. Diamond

Thursday April 3- Workers embarked upon march to Georgetown 8:30 am, District Inspector Jones and Stipendiary Magistrate Legg, left Georgetown for the East Bank

9:30 am news of the East Bank march reached Police Headquarters, Brickdam

9:45 Captain Ramsay and his men dispatched from Brickdam

10:05 Captain Ramsay arrived at River View bridge, Ruimveldt

10:40 Large section of the East Bank marchers arrived at River View bridge

11:55 The order to shoot was given

12:05 Shooting stopped

1:00 The wounded were taken to hospital

1:30 The dead taken away to mortuary in covered lorry

1:45 Arrested workers were sent to Brickdam

3:30 Capt. Ramsay was relieved by Capt. Irving of the British Guiana Militia

4:00 Order was restored.

Twelve died at the scene of the shooting while the thirteenth worker died of his wounds shortly after the incident.

[4] The following is a list of the workers who died at the scene of the shooting incident at Ruimveldt:

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| (1) James Green Ageday (m) | (2) Gangaya (m) |
| (3) Ramkarak or Rambarak (m) | (4) Jasodia, Jasoda or Bipia (f) |
| (5) George Somra (m) | (6) Badri (m) |
| (7) Boodnie or Bodie (m) | (8) Gobin (m) |
| (9) Umrai or Malai (m) | (10) Baput, Baloo or Baldeo (m) |
| (11) Beeput (f) | (12) Rampaul (m) |

* (m = male, f = female)

Source: [NAG] (Filed duplicate copy of document contained Governor's Despatch) in "The Ruimveldt Inquiry 1924." Minutes of an Inquiry Into the Deaths of Thirteen Persons Who Died From the Result of Bullet Wounds Received at Ruimveldt, British Guiana, on the 3rd Day of April 1924.

The strike in Georgetown on Monday March 31, was in response to a call by the BGLU. [5] The union demanded that the rates for stevedores be increased from \$1.60 to \$2.00 per day; ordinary packers from \$1.12 to \$1.44; and truckers from \$0.84 to \$1.20 per day. The union also demanded double time rates for night work, Saturday afternoons, holidays and for work done between 4:00 pm and 6:00 pm. [6]

On the second day of the strike, April 1, the workers organised a mammoth labour demonstration in the city. This demonstration, which began with about a thousand workers, was also attended by several hundred estate workers. [7] The union officials took great precautions to ensure that the union members were identified and activities were conducted in an orderly manner. Commenting upon this aspect of the demonstration, Chase noted that the strike "marked the first occasion on which pickets were used by the labour union. Each picket wore a badge of red cloth with a large 'P' on the left arm." [8] The Governor informed the Secretary of State that the procession which was escorted by the police, mounted and on foot, following the usual custom. [9]

In spite of the precautions, the activities of the workers developed in a way, which was not entirely anticipated by the union's executive. The Argosy noted: " All went well at the beginning, but as the demonstrators reached Water Street, [10] the crowd got out of hand and refused to listen to their leaders. [11] The Governor attributed this to the unexpected congregation of some thousands of loafers and hooligans in Water Street and their sudden action in entering business premises and then hotels and private houses. [12]

Led by a band and waving banners, the crowd moved through the streets of Georgetown. They entered department stores and forced employers to release their workers. Force was also employed by the striking workers to persuade those who insisted on staying on the job, to leave and join the demonstration. [13] From Water Street, the crowd moved to the waterfront area, anxious to get to the *S.S. Chigueceto* (a large cargo ship) where a number of men under Trim, the well-known strike breaker, were at work. Many of them were armed with sticks and staves. They were successfully diverted from the premises by the police, mounted and on foot, who had arrived on the scene under the command of the Acting Inspector-General, Major Widdup, County Inspector Gamble, and Acting Inspector-General. [14]

From the waterfront, the demonstrators moved to the electric cars, throwing themselves in their path as they approached, they brought them to a standstill. Workers invaded the cars, turning passengers out and forcibly compelling the motormen and conductors to leave their post. They then disconnected the electricity from the poles. [15] Satisfied, they moved on in a

united body, to the electric company's power station. There, they drove out the employees and extinguished the fire in the furnace. The next stop was the 'water works' where they ordered the workers out. A large section of the demonstrators also assembled outside Government House in Carmichael Street but made no attempt to enter. [16]

The next target was the Colonial Transport Department. Here there was a general walk-out with the result that both the East Coast Train [17] and the Demerara Ferry Service [18] were brought to a standstill. The railway employers were frightened and the train service to Berbice and all intermediate stations had to be suspended. It was not until the afternoon of the following day that rail communication with these points was resumed. [19] Not content with their exploits so far, the workers moved on to the labourers of the sewerage contractors and carpenters at work in various parts of the city.

Another significant feature of the demonstration was a systematic attacks upon private houses, ensuring that domestic staff left their positions. This phase of the operation was principally in the hands of women. [20] Main Street [21] was the main target. The protesters went from one resident to the next and also into hotels and boarding houses to coerce the domestics to stop working. Some of the workers left immediately as the crowd appeared because they did not welcome the prospect of a flogging; others were more reluctant to go, being resentful of the behaviour of the group. Many employers, adopting the policy of wisdom, (though they admired their servants who stood by them) advised them to leave. This was mainly to prevent wrecking their

belongings or an assault, as the demonstrators made no secret of their intention to get the servants out of the house, 'come what may.' [22]

Some excesses were committed during this phase of the activities. For example, in one house a girl was pulled out while 'picking' rice [23] for the breakfast table. Her employer ran to her rescue and was sent 'flying' with a blow. In carrying out this phase of their operation, the group appeared to have been actuated by a vendetta, as many were heard to direct the others to some home or the other as the women who " live deh " had discharged them sometime before " for nothing at all. " [24]

Up the steps of a well-known resident they clambered and were met by his wife. They demanded that the servants leave at once, but the lady of the house informed them that her servants had nothing to complain of and should not be molested as they were good girls, she having had them with her from girlhood and trained them well. She detailed the terms under which they worked and the strikers allowed them to carry on. They were not however, to be got rid of so easily, as the lady learnt to her great cost, for she was surprised to see them make themselves comfortable in the kitchen and demolish every bit of pastry she had just baked, in addition to " cleanin up " her breakfast. Then they left glad in the possession of a " belly full" on which they " would make nigger weep. " [25]

At the Park Hotel, one of the girls protested that she had the boarders' dinner to prepare and could not leave. This greatly incensed the mob and as the Governor's Report of the incident notes, she was fortunate to get off without a sound thrashing.

Eventually she was forced to leave. [26]

Several attacks of this nature were carried out in different parts of the city. The domestics and other categories of workers who were at their places of work, reacted differently in several ways to the activities of the striking workers. Some willingly joined, needing little motivation. Others had to be forced or motivated in other ways. There were also those who refused to join and had to be evacuated by force.

Female participation in the demonstration and even the forced entry of homes can be explained in the light of the rising levels of unemployment. Domestic servants were particularly affected during the period 1922 to 1924. Domestics worked longer hours than other category of workers-at the time, between 12-16 hours daily without break. Chase noted that their " wages were so low that prostitution had to be resorted to supplement their earnings. " [27]

In their quest for increased wages better working conditions, the women were able to utilise structures and connections created on the estates, within churches and other social organisations. In 1913, through the initiative of Lady Egerton (wife of the Governor), the British Guiana United Home Industries and Self-Help Association, was established. The purpose of this organisation was to assist women of meagre financial means to earn a livelihood by making craft items at home for sale. [28]

Although most of these organisations were created and administered by white women of the plantocracy, the involvement of working women in unpaid charity work, enabled them to make

inroads into the public world and see themselves as the moral guardians of colonial society. [29] This is based on the claim that women understand the need for jobs and lower food prices more than men, who spend much of their time away from the home, the markets and the children. [30]

These associations in many ways, aided in the continuation of the tradition of women in resistance in Guiana by providing them with a public forum for the articulation of their grievances. Attention can be drawn to the roles of prominent African women in the 'emancipation rebellions' [31] and the initiative taken by members of the 'weeding gang' during disputes on the sugar estates. [32]

By 1924, women were actively involved in the unemployment campaigns and demonstrations which were held in Georgetown and other areas of the country. Women (employed and unemployed) made up a significant part of the membership of the UNIA and the BGLU, during the period. [33] These factors contributed to the interest shown and, at times, over-zealous participation, by the female workers of Georgetown in the strike and entry of homes.

The residents were terrorised and outraged at the invasion of their homes. According to the Argosy, "of course, the frame of mind of householders is one of the considerable chagrin, for what occurred... was by no means a strike, but a war against the community." [34] These activities provoked quick and decisive action by the authorities.

The Governor's Reaction.

The Governor's main concern was to restore order in the city as quickly as possible. According to him "Past experience has

shewn (sic) that prompt action alone can prevent the spread of disorder in a mixed population of this character... " [35] An emergency meeting of the Executive Council was called. The council unanimously endorsed the request of the Militia for the closure of all liquor shops and the prohibition of assemblies. [36] To enforce these measures, the Executives Council issued the necessary proclamations. [37]

In addition, the Governor, acting on the council's advice, requested the Commander-in-Chief, North America and West Indies Station, to send one of Her Majesty's ships to the colony and asked the Governor of Trinidad " if it would be possible to hold an armed force of 100 to 150 men in readiness to embark in case of necessity." [38] The following telegram from the Governor to the Secretary of State, arrived at the Colonial Office on the 1 April, at 8:40 pm:

Serious strike. And disorder. Have asked Commander-In-Chief to send warship. Thomson. [39]

On the April 2, at 1:44 am, the Admiralty received the following telegram from the Commander-In-Chief of North America and West Indies, stationed at Bermuda:

Urgent message from Governor of British Guiana reports strikes developing may become serious and request ship as early as possible. Have directed H.M.S. Curlew to proceed from Kingston (Jamaica) to Georgetown at 17 knots forthwith. [40]

Critchlow and the BGLU.

By mid-day of the second day of the strike, the situation in Georgetown took a turn for the worse. By this time the striking workers were joined by several residents of the city.

The crowd, which was significantly larger than the first day, was in a state of excitement and had to be escorted by mounted police as they stormed through the city street after street.

At this stage, Critchlow and " Professor " Osborne, [41] who had been touring the city in a cab, confronted the crowd at the Water Works and persuaded the workers to move to Bourda Green [42] where they proposed to hold a meeting. Critchlow appealed to them not to injure their cause by violent acts. He made it clear that the leadership of the BGLU would disassociate itself from any act of violence. [43]

At Bourda Green, Critchlow addressed the crowd from the cab in which he travelled around the city. He informed the workers that he was expecting to hear from the Merchants (regarding their demands) later that day and requested that they reassembled there (Bourda Green) at 8:00 pm. to hear what had been agreed upon. He repeated the call for them to be peaceful and suggested that they returned to their homes and rest themselves for the night meeting. [44]

"Professor" Osborne also addressed the gathering. However, his message was of a slightly different nature. He declared that the hour had come when they should demand their rights and see that they got them. According to him, they should no longer worship the "white god" but should know themselves. He stressed that the jail had no terror for him and if Critchlow was killed hundreds of Critchlows would be born every hour. They must no longer accept starvation wages for they had the right to live as other races lived. [45]

Shortly before the meeting, Inspector Gamble arrived on the

scene. He interviewed Critchlow as to the line of action decided upon. It is important to note that the crowd showed marked respect for Mr. Gamble. This was largely because of his understanding and tactful dealing with them in the past under similar circumstances. [46]

At 3.00 pm. Messrs Critchlow, J.L. Lewis and other officials of the labour union attended a conference at the office of the Hon. Mr. Dias and Mr. C.R. Brown. Based on decisions taken at this conference, Mr. P.N. Brown approached the Chamber of Commerce on behalf of the union. A conference was arranged for 9.00 am. the following day in the rooms of the Chamber between employers and representatives of the Labour Union, where the situation was to be discussed. Towards the evening, a large number of workers assembled at the Labour Union Hall in Regent Street where labour hymns were sung and "Prof" Osborne, again addressed the gathering. [47]

By evening, a large number of civilians had been sworn in as special constables at the Brickdam Police Station [48] by Mr. J.H.S. McCowan S.M. Also, the artillery and the infantry militia companies and the reservists were called out. The special constables wore white badges. They patrolled the city with staves (in motor cars) to protect private citizens. The militiamen, who bore arms, were posted at the Water Works, Electric Company, railway station, Wireless Station, and other important points. [49]

Between 2:00 pm and 3:00 pm, an extraordinary "Gazette" containing the following proclamation was issued:

Whereas the peace and good order of the city of Georgetown is distributed by certain lawless and evil disposed individuals, I do hereby declare that the provisions of title X of the summary conviction offence ordinance, 1893, shall be in force in the city aforesaid from the date of this proclamation. And I do therefore order and require all retail spirits shops to be closed, and kept closed until further orders.
[50]

The Gazette outlined the Government's "intention to put an end to all unlawful riotous and tumultuous proceedings by force."

[51] Orders were issued for all unlawful, riotous and tumultuous assemblies to be dispersed. If necessary, the Riot Act was to be read "and the powers conferred by law will then be used."

[52] The Colonial Secretary made a call for the citizens to desist from joining assemblies and crowds "as by so doing they run the risk of being injured or even losing their lives." [53]

By 4:00 pm all rum shops were closed and the city was under martial law. [54]

During the course of the evening, Critchlow was summoned from the Union Hall to the Brickdam Police Station where he had a conference with the Inspector General of Police and Mr. C.R. Browne. Critchlow informed the officers of the proposed meeting of the union at 8:00 pm at Bourda Green. He was informed that because martial law had been proclaimed, holding an outdoor meeting would be illegal. However, he was given permission to use the City Hall for meeting at 2:00 pm the following day. [55]

At 7:30 pm, Critchlow addressed a gathering of the strikers in the Union Hall. The meeting was mainly to decide what wages their representatives should accept when they met the Chamber of Commerce the following day. Because of the large gathering and the presence of several categories of workers, it was difficult

to arrive at a timely representative position. However, it was decided that a meeting of the union's executive will convene early on the following day " to decide on what they considered reasonable to accept." [56]

The gathering was told of the restrictions placed on public (open air) gatherings because of the state of Martial Law in the city. Critchlow explained that meetings could have been held in the union's hall but not outside. He appealed to both unionists [57] and non-unionists not to assemble on the street after their meeting on the following day. He stressed that during the meeting with the Chamber of Commerce, " those who were not employed should not be seen anywhere in the vicinity of the Exchange Room (the Chamber's meeting place), as the employers might cancel the conference if they were there. " [58]

Critchlow appealed to all to go straight to their homes after the meeting, and informed them of the permission which he obtained from the Town Hall. He insisted that acts of violence should be avoided at all cost and pledged to do his best on their behalf at the conference. [59]

The city was unusually quiet during the night after the exciting events of the day. After the meeting with Critchlow, the crowd dispersed from the Union Hall. The streets were completely deserted, with the exception of the patrolling police and special constables. Order had been completely restored and the city was under the authority of the military.

On the third day, many category of workers reported for work without incident. The employees of the Demerara Electric Company returned to their work with the knowledge of complete police

protection. The city's tram service was restored. Water Street [60] reopened for business as usual and shopping was resumed. However, the wharf labourers remained on strike and assembled in small groups in Water Street and other parts of the city. [61]

Armed police patrolled the principal thoroughfare and there was a display by a section of the mounted police. The special constables, who had done duty during the night, were still in evidence on the streets and others were sworn in at the Brickdam Police Station [62] during the day. Among those who were sworn in was Mr. E.F. Fredericks, President of the Negro Progress Convention (NPC) [63]

The conference between the employers and the labour representatives, which was scheduled to take place during the morning, was postponed by the employers, for the next day (April 3). [64] However, a meeting with the Governor, the leading officials of the Chamber of Commerce and Critchlow-on behalf of the BGLU-took place during the early hours of the morning. [65]

Before the meeting was convened, the Governor met with the Honourable Mr. P.N. Browne, K.C. and Mr. V.F. Dias at the Government House. Browne suggested the appointment of a Board of Inquiry composed of representatives of the government, the Chamber of Commerce, and the labourers, to discuss the situation, inquire into the matter and make recommendations. [66] The Governor rejected this suggestion because of his opposition to any form of government intervention in labour disputes. He expressed the opinion that the issue should be settled between the employers and the employees. He felt that workers should not strike without giving prior notice to their employers and

suggested that they (the workers), in the meantime, should return to work with the expectation that any increase which might have been subsequently agreed upon could be made retroactive. [67]

It was out of this initial meeting with Brown and Dias that the meeting with the employers and the labour representatives was called. The following members of the Chamber of Commerce were first summoned to Government House: Mr. T.H. Dalglesh, President; Honourable Mr. T.T. Smellie and Messrs J.B. Cassels and M.B.G. Austin. [68]

These men were interviewed by the Governor on the nature of the conflict. They pointed out to him that the workers had struck without making prior demands and they were not prepared to consider the situation until they resumed work. They would then hear their grievances but held out no promise of an increase in wages. [69]

At about 1:15 pm, Critchlow was summoned to Government House where he was informed (by the Governor) of the employers' position. After some discussion, it was agreed to have the conference with the Chamber of Commerce at 8:30 am the following day (April 3), at the Chamber's meeting rooms. [70]

During the evening the government issued the following handbill:

His Excellency the Governor, had an interview this morning with the representatives of the employers and with Mr. H. Critchlow, representing the British Guiana Labour Union, regarding the labour situation.

The employers have not refused to make any increase in wages, but they are not prepared to take any decision on the question without full and friendly discussion with the representatives of their recognised labourers both Union and Non-Union.

The employers have therefore agreed to meet these representatives at 8:30 am Thursday, 3rd April and to give full consideration to the workers' demands.

Mr. Critchlow for his part undertook to persuade the labourers to resume work on the ship at once, pending the result of the above conference with the understanding that if any increase of wages is given, such increase shall take effect from the time at which work was resumed.

*By His Excellency's Command
(SGD.) R. Popham Lobb
Colonial Secretary [71]*

Early in the afternoon, at 2:00 pm a mass meeting under the auspices of the Labour Union was held at the Rooms of the Town Hall. The main Hall was packed with an excited crowd composed largely of women and a large number of East Indians. [72] A significant number of workers who could not gain admission assembled outside while about a dozen armed mounted police officers lined up in High and Regent Streets to preserve order. [73]

Critchlow addressed the crowd announcing that he had just come from a conference at the Government House with the Governor and the representatives of the employers. He also briefed the workers about the conference scheduled for 8:30 am the following morning. Critchlow was careful to emphasise that while the employers were willing to have discussions with the representatives of unionist and non-unionist, there was no

guarantee of an increase in wages. The workers, especially the stevedores and wharf labourers, were to resume work pending the decision of the conference. At this stage a voice from the crowd enquired, " suppose they say they are not given any now ? " [74] In response, Critchlow cautioned that they must wait until the employers said that before they discussed it. [75] They were reminded of the warning to stay away from the vicinity of the Chambers during the conference. They could congregate at the Union Hall or remain in their homes. Those who were inclined to work should return to their jobs. A voice from the crowd exclaimed: " We can't work, man. " [76]

At this stage the workers entered into a boisterous discussion during which many became very agitated. When order was eventually restored, Critchlow pointed out that there were many unionists and non-unionists and he would like to make it quite clear to the members of the media who were present that 'Hubert Critchlow' was advising unionists to return to work. He then thanked the workers and other parties for attending. [77]

At the end of the meeting, the crowds broke off in small groups discussing the situation. It was evident that they were highly dissatisfied with the state of affairs and in particular, the suggestion that they return to work immediately with no guarantee of a wage increase. A large number of them lingered outside the Town Hall for some time and had to be persuaded by the Acting Deputy Inspector General, County Inspector Gamble, to go to their homes. [78]

After the meeting (at about 2:30 pm), Critchlow, on behalf of the union issued the following hand-bill:

*Workers! Workers!! Workers!!!
In view of the interview at Government House
(today) 2nd April, 1924
between His Excellency the Governor, the Merchants and
myself for*

PEACE

*I am advising all workers and more especially Unionists
to turn out to their work*

At Once

*Pending the decision of a conference to be held at
The Chamber of Commerce
Tomorrow, 3rd April, 1924*

At 8:30 am

*Between the Merchants, the workers and myself
regarding wages.*

*Although no promise of an increase is made, I appeal
to you, one and all, unionists especially for the peace
and goodwill of this Colony to resume work at once.*

*Hubert Critchlow
Secretary-Treasurer
British Guiana Labour Union
142 Regent Street, Lacytown
2nd April, 1924. [79]*

In spite of the show of resistance by many of the workers to the idea of an immediate return to work, as early as the day after the demonstration (Tuesday April 1) workers from various department were beginning to report for work. This began as a trickle in the morning, but by afternoon, most departments of public utility were functioning at full capacity. It was widely speculated that by the next day (Wednesday, 2nd) all the workers would resume work. [80]

The men employed by the electric company power station, reported for work during the morning. The firemen of the R.M.S. Chigueceto who substituted for them [81] were free to return to their ship. A company of artillery men with a machine gun guarded the premises during the day and late into the night. This guaranteed protection for the returning workers. [82]

The railway service between Georgetown and Rosignol which

was suspended on the day before (Tuesday 1st April) was resumed on the following day. A mixed train (transporting passengers and goods) left Georgetown for Rosignol at 12:24 pm and returned later in the day. A goods train also left at 12:10 pm while another special goods train left at 1:30 pm. A mixed train left Rosignol at 11:15 am and arrived in Georgetown at 2:41 pm. By the end of the day (Wednesday 2nd) the majority of the workers, employed by the Colonial Transport Department were back in their jobs. [83] The workers were anxiously awaiting the outcome of the conference scheduled for the following day.

The Conference With the Chamber of Commerce

As arranged, the conference was held during the morning of the following day (Thursday 3rd April). Twenty workers represented the unionists and non-unionists during the discussions. Mr. J.L. Lewis, the union's Assistant Secretary, was one of Critchlow principal assistants at these talks.

After evidence was taken and views exchanged, the shipping agents and owners rejected the wage claims made by the workers. [84] They insisted that no case had been made out for a general increase in the rates of wages on the grounds of an increase in the cost of living.

As far as the employers were concerned, the real grievance was in the fact that many of the wharf and stevedore labourers were unable to get sufficient work to provide adequate earnings because of the large number of persons who flocked to the waterfront in search of work. They expressed the view that an increase in port wages, would result in a rise of the cost of living.

The remedy of the workers' situation, they argued, was to be found in better distribution of labour throughout the colony. and not through measures such as the implementation of a Rent Restriction Ordinance, [85] which the government was expected to legislate. It was also conceded that there were certain anomalies with regard to the wages of 'coal women' and that steps would be taken to remedy these. [86]

At this stage, when sugar workers were militantly geared for struggle under the banner of the BGLU, Critchlow urged waterfront workers to return to work whilst he appealed to the Governor to intervene. The workers patiently waited, hoping that Critchlow would merit the Governor's sympathy in his appeal for an Arbitration Board. [87]

On the 5th, the Governor promptly rejected Critchlow's appeal. There was no legislation, he correctly stated, which then empowered government to set up an Arbitration Board and to compel the parties involved in the dispute to accept its award. [88] Instead, the Governor gave directions for the appointment of a Commission to be presided over by M. Justice Douglas 'to enquire into and report on the conditions of employment and rates of pay of the waterfront workers.' The other members of the Commission were: Hon. W.J. Gilchrist, the Attorney General, Mr. W.A. Parker-Registrar, Hon. P.N. Browne K.C., F. Dias and Messrs Critchlow and J. Grimes representing the workers, and two representatives of the employers. [89]

The report of the Commission was submitted to the Governor on the 29th April, 1924. Critchlow and Grimes submitted minor reports reflecting the position of the workers. [90] The findings

of the Commission clearly revealed that the earnings of several category of workers were inadequate to meet their daily requirements. [91]

In addition to the Commission, the Governor also initiated the formation of a Labour Exchange Bureau. Soon after he was approached by Critchlow on the issue of arbitration, he took the the decision " invite the Combined Court to sanction the establishment of a Labour Exchange Bureau. " [92] This idea was mooted by the labour union. However, Governor Thomson was convinced that such a department would facilitate a more efficient distribution of labour throughout the colony. [93]

The resolution was passed on April 16, 1924 as No. XXIII. [94] A special committee comprising of the Acting Immigration Agent General, E.R. Brassington, the Hon. P.N. Browne K.C., and Mr. J.A. Luckhoo K.C., was appointed on September 1, 1924. [95] According to the committee's ruling, the bureau should address the following:

- 1(a) *To enable the workers to obtain employment and consequently;*
- (b) *To help forward the transfer of superabundant or superfluous labour to places where its services are needed or to act as intermediary between those who lack work and employers who need workers.*
- 2(c) *To assist in methodising the employment of stevedores, wharf-men and such others, so as to afford them as far as possible, sufficient regular work for their support...*
- 3(d) *To assist the casual labourer whose employment is unstable on account of the irregular arrival of vessles, by ading him to obtain supplementary work of a suitable nature. [96].*

It was proposed that the bureau be located in Georgetown with branches in outlying areas. Care was to be taken to provide representation for several categories of workers and also to

incorporate existing forms of labour arrangement with the new proposals. The proposed name of the department was " Labour and Immigration Department " with the machinery for Indian Immigration as one branch, the Labour Bureau another and the Institute of Mines and Forest a third branch. [97] The Commission alluded to the fact that such a bureau was established in Trinidad in 1919 and an attempt was made before 1924 to establish the same in British Guiana. [98]

The Activities on the East Bank.

The workers on the East Bank were in constant contact with Georgetown. Weekly trips to the city were made to obtain building materials such as boards, staves, nails and aluminum sheets. In addition, some of the East Bank residents sold their ground provisions, green vegetables, chickens, eggs and other produce to middlemen in the city.

Many estate workers from plantations along the East Bank were registered members of the British Guiana East Indian Association. These individuals and other workers who were not members but supporters of the Association, regularly visited the Association's headquarters in Georgetown. The main purpose of these visits was to inform Kawall (the President of the Association) about their problems on the estates. Kawall briefed them on the activities of the Association on their behalf.

There were also the periodic visits by large groups of workers to the office of the Immigration Agent (Crosby). Disputes relating to wages, conditions of employment, the attitude of the 'drivers' and overseers towards the workers and many other issues which affected their livelihood were taken

before this official for arbitration.

During these visits, the estate workers took the opportunity to enquire about the activities of the Georgetown workers. On several occasions, they were able to observe at first hand strike action and demonstrations along the streets of the capital. For example hundreds of workers from the East Bank attended the labour demonstration in the city on April 1st. In addition, East Bank workers regularly attended meetings organised by the BGLU. Small groups of workers and even larger delegations from various areas of the country districts, journeyed to the capital to meet with Critchlow and other officials of the union. During the weeks preceding the incident at Ruimveldt, the East Bank estate workers were relatively well informed about the activities of the Georgetown waterfront workers in relation to their labour demands.

A significant connection between the activities in Georgetown and those on the East Bank, can be seen in the lessons of the strike action. " A major strike struggle is a momentous occasion in the workers' lives, involving emotion- laden moments of intergroup conflict and ingroup solidarity which are not commonplace in working-class life." [99]

These moments can result in dramatic changes in workers relation and their general perception to their struggle. Commenting upon these features in a strike in Britain during 1970, Lane and Roberts noted that some of the rank-and-file participants experienced such a change in political outlook and behaviour patterns that " the strike could be rightly described as a revolutionary experience. " [100]

Lenin expressed the opinion that the 'strike experience' can lead to a '*workplace class consciousness.*' This consciousness enabled the workers to experience individual empowerment which cause them to gain in assertiveness and self-confidence; the strike gives the workers new hope that their situation can be better; the workers develop some general perspective on the class structure of the whole society and on the need for the working class to unite and struggle. " It becomes quite clear to the workers that the capitalist class as a whole is the enemy of the whole working class." [101]

The evidence supports [102] the contention that the strike and other activities of the workers in Georgetown had a profound effect upon the activities of the workers on the East Bank. The estate workers who, in 'normal, peaceful' times carried on with their work, used the 'moment' created by the strike in Georgetown to approach the Manager of Pln. Providence and 'demanded' an audience to discuss wages and conditions of employment.

Throughout the activities on the East Bank, the marchers made a point of calling at various plantations to encourage workers (irrespective of race or category) to join the procession to the city. It is also revealing that the workers ignored attempts by Stipendiary Magistrate Legge and other officials to discourage them from going to Georgetown. They were convinced that the issues which they pursued could have only been resolved in the city by Critchlow and 'Crosby' and in solidarity with the water front workers. Workers' solidarity was demonstrated in the nature and composition of the marchers (comprised of workers from almost every plantation along the East Bank). The workers

demonstrated as a group, confronted the military at River View bridge and insisted that they enter the city as a group instead of a delegation. [103]

The activities on the East Bank started on the 2nd April, when the manager of Plantation Providence refused to meet with labourers to discuss their grievances. [104] They broke into his home and demanded an audience. According to one worker, at 6:00 am, all estate labourers went to Providence to enquire about wages. " The manager asked us all what we come for and we must go to work. We ask for an increase of wages because food is dear." He said " he will not give half a cent more. If you like work, if you don't, sit down at home. " [105] Eventually, he responded by promising to listen to them if they returned the next day in an orderly manner with a delegation. [106] Anderson, the manager, failed to appear at the appointed time on the following day and the workers proceeded to march towards Georgetown.

The crowd which gathered at Providence was a mixed gathering, men and a significant proportion of women and youths. Racially, the two main groups (Blacks and East Indians) were represented, although the East Indians were in the majority. On the march to the city, the group started relatively small-from a few hundred-and systematically grew into a large body of workers on the move-ranging from about 4,000 to 6,000. [107] The marchers adopted the strategy of calling at the 'Great Houses' [108] and plantations along the route with the sole purpose of inviting workers to join the march. Some degree of persuasion was employed to convince unwilling workers. This strategy by the

East Bank workers, bears striking similarity to the way the workers in Georgetown moved from one place of employment to the other, calling workers out to join the demonstration. [109]

In 1924, it was natural for the East Bank workers to journey in groups to Georgetown. It was common practice for the East Indian estate workers to pay periodic visits to "Crosby" the Immigration Agent General. The purpose of these visits was to express their concern over wages and other factors relating to labour on the estate in the hope of getting the Immigration Agent General to intervene on their behalf. They were therefore responding in a predictable way when their appeal to the manager at Providence failed to yield the desirable result, they turned to "Crosby." [110]

It is significant that a large number of the workers who were on the march indicated that they were going to Georgetown to see Critchlow. [111] Those who made this claim were both black and east Indian workers. The evidence supports the position that the East Bank workers were aware of the activities of the Georgetown workers and the BGLU. Many East Bank workers visit the City on a regular weekly basis. These visits were of a commercial nature—to make purchases or sell their own produce. Boodnie, wife of the deceased Somra, told the Inquiry that the last time she saw her husband alive, he was on his way to Georgetown to buy boards. [112] In addition, workers regularly visited friends and relatives in the City.

On these visits during the month of April, it can be concluded that they witnessed some of the activities of the waterfront workers. One estate worker recalled "I came to

Georgetown on Monday [31st March] to buy goods in the market... I came to Town on Tuesday [1st April] to see Kawall... and then we went to see what the black people were doing, about 30 or 40 of us from different estates." [113] He went on to say that: "I see lots of black people moving about on Tuesday and I hear people say they want more pay and will see the Governor." [114] Contact of this nature exposed the East Bank workers to the activities of their Georgetown counterparts and also informed them of the reasons for the open demonstration. It would have been easy and logical for them to grasp the significance of these activities to their own situation on the estates.

The testimony of Mr. Kawall, who was the current President of the East Indian Association, is of importance. Although he did not acknowledge any formal association between his organisation and the BGLU, he was not unaware of the influence the activities of the City workers exerted on the East Bank workers. He noted: " I have never seen a crowd like this before. I think they thought they would do the same thing as they saw in town on Tuesday... It was in the newspaper. The demonstration meeting was published on Sunday. " [115] However, he was quick to acknowledge the significant amount of the East Bank workers—even some who were members of the East Indian Association—who looked to Critchlow and the BGLU for a solution to their numerous problems. Kawall admitted that many of the workers who were on their way to the City were intent on seeing Critchlow. [116]

During the days leading up to the incident (in Georgetown and on the East Bank) there were a series of public meetings on the East Bank. These were separately hosted by the East Indian

Association and representatives of the BGLU. One of the main issues on the agenda of the East Indian Association was the drought on the East Bank and the resultant water problems experienced by many workers. [117] In addition, Kawall informed the gathering that two representatives of the Association were sent to India to place the case of the East Indian workers before the Indian Government. [118] He also stressed the importance for workers to negotiate with the estate authorities for wages acceptable to them.

Along with organised gatherings at the village meeting places, [119] representatives of the BGLU visited several plantations and conducted informal discussions with workers. [120] These representatives interacted with workers in their homes and at work. During these encounters useful information about the nature of the work of the union was passed on to the East Bank residents. Of importance, was the wide circulation of a leaflet which was prepared by the labour union. [121]

In addition to direct observation, information on the sugar plantation was diffused through a series of channels. These channels emerged naturally out of the common experience of the workers and the features created by the living and working arrangements on the plantations.

A number of lasting relationships were created among East Indian immigrants who journeyed to British Guiana on the same boat from India. On the plantation, passengers from the same ship stayed close to each other. They socialised whenever it was possible and shared information about numerous aspects of plantation life. Very often, when two or more members of these

groups are transferred to another plantation, this close bond is maintained and in some cases strengthened in their bid to bargain collectively for the best possible terms of employment, which included residential arrangements.

On the plantation, many of the workers lived in family huts but a significant number shared ranges in a manner which was essentially communal. By necessity, the residents had to share facilities. For example common walk-way and doorway to their quarters, common water vessels and in some cases, even common cooking and eating facilities. Living in such close proximity, strong social bonds were fostered over time. Many workers were identified by the range of 'logies' they occupied. On several estates, the occupants of the same range of logies formed their own '*shovel gang*' [122] the '*free shovel gang*'. [123]

In the cane fields, workers from various sections, performed their tasks in gangs. [124] Both in the work situation and in the general society, 'gang' loyalty was particularly strong. Members took care to protect each other and ensured that each was kept 'up-to-date' with the current situation as far as work and their welfare were concerned. Unity and co-ordination were useful features when gangs negotiated for wages and acceptable conditions of work. In this way, most of the workers' activities were reflective of the gang.

Commenting upon the spread of information relating to the workers' activities in Georgetown, Prince Edwards, a worker of Pln. Diamond noted:

I heard of trouble in town it was common talk on Tuesday that there was a strike in town...On Wednesday I saw an East Indian who told me that Mr. Kawall and Mr. Singh were there that day. *He is one of my gang.* [125]

Through this estate network, the news of what was happening in Georgetown became common knowledge along the East Bank. One worker reflected:

I heard there was a meeting. People talked about it on Sunday and say they go to Crosby to ask for more wages. On Tuesday I came to see what they would do. I saw Kawall passing on the road on Monday or Tuesday up to Diamond and I saw people speaking to him and I want to hear what he said...plenty of people came to hear him on the dam at Providence... [126]

These channels were effectively utilised to pass on information about the activities of the workers in Georgetown. In addition, the following hand-bill which was issued on Monday (March 31) on the East Bank, reinforced much of the information which was in circulation in the area:

Workers! Workers!! Workers!!!
conditions in life are getting harder each
day. Don't you feel them? prices of food stuffs and
other necessities of life are increased over and above
the present rate of wages paid.
Have conditions made better by getting a Trade Board
formed so as to maintain the standard of wages and
adjust same according to the prevailing condition
on the Labour Market

-----0-----
whether you are from town or country, you suffer
the same
If you want better wages and better means of
living,
-----join the-----
demonstration
on Tuesday 1st April, 1924, at 9:00 am from
M.G. Labour Union Hall, Regent Street
To arms! to arms ye brave! the avenging sword in
sheath!
March on! all hearts resolved
on liberty or death
Don't halt in your opinions, remember
'There's not to reason why,
There's but to do or die'
Do your bit.
Remember---" An injury to one is an injury to all."
A few days out won't kill you if you were
Discharged from work or taken ill, you had to
Remain out.
We will demonstrate for days, until we get what we
want
Pass this on. [127]

The Reaction of the Officials on the East Bank

In response to the news of unrest at Providence, District
Inspector Jones (along with Stipendiary Magistrate Legg) left
Georgetown at 8:30 am. Inspector Jones' instructions were to
prevent the workers from entering the city, avoid the use of
force and explain fully to the striking workers the purpose of
the proclamation which was issued on the 1st April, and the
consequence of any disorderly conduct. [128] Also in the
Inspector's party were one Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) and
seven men of the militia reserve who manned a machine gun in a

lorry. [129]

The strategy of the party was to call at the Plantations where the workers were most active. Visits were made to Plns. Houston, Peters Hall, Providence and Farm. [130] On these plantations, striking workers were actively involved in persuading their colleagues who were on the job to stop work and join the strike. The striking workers, accompanied by a band, assembled in strategic areas on the plantations. These ranged from areas on *access dams*, to the manager's yard. Almost every individual in the various gatherings was armed with a stick. [131]

Magistrate legge, supported by D.I. Jones, read and explained the proclamation to the workers at each of the plantations they visited. It was clear that the majority of the workers were heading to Pln. Diamond to see Mr. Anderson the "*Big (Manja) Manager.*" [132] D.I. Jones, anxious to prevent the crowd from entering the city, decided to take up his position at Diamond in anticipation of the arrival of the strikers. He arrived at about 11:00 am and remained there for over three hours. [133] Messrs Kawall and Persaud of the East Indian Association arrived on the scene shortly after D.I. Jones. These men acted as mediators between Mr. Anderson, the manager and the crowd. By 5:30 pm copies of the proclamation, which by then, applied to the whole colony, were posted in public places along the East Bank. [134]

Early the following day, Thursday 3rd April, workers from various plantations, in the mood of the day before, reassembled and started a march to the city. D.I. Jones recalled that about

8:30 am, he approached a crowd of some 2,000 people at Plantation Farm, who were on their way to Georgetown. He was unable to persuade them to return to their homes. During the course of the morning, he estimated that at least 4,000 people passed plantation Providence on their way to Georgetown. This crowd was joined by other workers from Plantations and villages between Providence and the city. [135]

At 9:30 am, on that morning, information was received at police headquarters Brickdam, that a riotous crowd, some three or four thousand strong was marching upon Georgetown with " fixed determination of seeing Critchlow or some other labour leader." [136] The Commandant, Local Forces, instructed Captain Ramsay, Black watch Staff Officer, Local Forces, to proceed at Ruimveldt bridge to prevent the crowd from entering the city. However, he was permitted to allow " any reasonable deputation to enter with a view to their placing their grievances before the British Guiana Labour Union Authorities. " [137]

Captain Ramsay left Brickdam at 9:45 am with thirty-one special constables and a V/G (Vicker Gun) mounted on a P.W.D. (Public Works Department) lorry manned with a crew of ten officers. At 10:05 am Captain Ramsay and his party arrived at the bridge where his troops were reinforced by sixteen armed policemen from the " Depot Reserve Division. " [138] Captain Ramsay disposition was as follows: " Mounted Police in line held the road two-hundred yards in front of the south of the bridge. The armed policemen were lined up across the road some fifty yards behind them." [139] According to the Captain:

My vicker gun was positioned in the lorry upon the bridge. A detachment of five from the gun team and five from the armed police were positioned on a side dam and koker some 200 yards to the right of the bridge. My left flank was open but sufficiently guarded by a broad and deep canal. The special constables held all narrow bridges leading from rows of houses onto the road across minor ditches on both flanks of the road. [140]

At 10:40 am the crowd, beating drums and waving sticks and branches and shouting and dancing, had advanced to within fifty yards of the advanced line of mounted police. They were stopped by Captain Ramsay who called upon their leaders to advance alone and speak with Magistrate Legge, who was standing beside him in front of the troops. The leaders emerged from the crowd. they were repeatedly told that such an unlawful crowd could not enter Georgetown, but that a deputation of five blacks and five East Indians would be allowed to pass. (although a deputation was identified, the members were sent through to Georgetown) [141] The others were to return to their homes. [142] The marchers refused to disperse and insisted that they were on their way to Georgetown to see Critchlow to get grievances redressed.

Many sticks were peacefully collected from the advanced members of the crowd but others in the rear were armed with large stones, glass bottles, ugly staffs and constantly interrupted the negotiations in front. Although many leaders suggested that the crowd be dispersed, the workers stood their ground. Captain Ramsay ordered the special constables to drive the crowd back. In response to the action by the special constables, large sections of the crowd crossed the ditches on either side of the road and became a threat to both flanks. [143]

In reply to this new development, Captain Ramsay ordered

up all the mounted police from Brickdam. S.M. Billyeald, who was in charge of the additional consignment of mounted police, was ordered to divide his troops into three parties. One party on the east of the road, another on the west and himself with the remaining on the road itself. At 11:45 am the forces were ordered by Captain Ramsay, to make a batton charge. This was repeated several times. [144]

At this point in the confrontation, Kawall and Ramprashad, an engineer and member of the BGEIA played a significant role in the activities. They appealed continuously to the crowd not to break law and to observe the boundaries established by Captain Ramsay. In addition, they appealed to Captain Ramsay and some of the other officers to be lenient with people. [145]

Shortly before the order was given to shoot, the Riot Act Proclamation was read by Mr. Legge in English. Kawall translated in Hindi for the benefit of many of the East Indian workers who were not completely literate in the English Language. It should be mentioned that most of the government notices and proclamation which were posted in the villages and plantations along the East Bank, were written in English. Mr. Soobrian who was the official Madrasi Interpreter of the Immigration Department was not invited to the scene at Ruimveldt. Mr. King who was performing the duties of Immigration Agent said that throughout the incident, the military or government officials did not communicate with the Immigration Department. [146]

Kawall suggested to Captain Ramsay that he was willing to journey to the city in order to get the Immigration Agent or even the Governor to visit Ruimveldt for the purpose of making a

direct appeal to the workers. Captain Ramsay did not entertain this proposal and a further batton charge was ordered. [147]

Although the mounted police performed effectively, the crowd quickly regrouped. In addition, many of the workers took shelter behind and under houses [148] on either side of the road. They commenced to throw sticks, stones, bottles and other similar missiles. Captain Ramsay, at this point, felt that his " mounted police were being very severely pelted on the centre road from crowds on either flank. In addition a large crowd was gathering on the Georgetown side of the bridge. Captain Ramsay reported: " I ordered my armed policemen to fire some shots into them from both flanks. This was done at 11:55 hours." [149]

Realising they were being fired upon the crowd immediately scattered, but several successive rushes were made from rows of houses on either side of the road by the mob pelting stones, which they armed themselves with each time they were driven back. Each of these offensive rushes was met by a few rounds of rifle fire which had the desired effect of stopping the stone throwing. Forty-two rounds in all were fired. Casualties inflicted totalled twenty-four, some of whom were peaceful citizens who were in the line of fire. [150] Ramsay noted that " the crowd came to hand by 12:05 hours and by 13:00 hours all wounded were collected and sent to hospital. A native doctor... gave valuable assistance." [151]

Dr. Haaslam, Surgeon and Captain of the Local Forces was in charge of collecting the dead, some eight in number (among those who died on the spot). Dr. Earle also rendered valuable assistance at a time when tempers were flaring on all sides. His

fine personality and tactful dealing with the workers helped to secure a peace that had been so dearly enforced. The dead were taken in a covered lorry to the mortuary under escort at 1:30 pm. [152]

The District Inspector General of Police made a number of arrests. These prisoners were dispatched to Brickdam at 1:45pm. Captain Ramsay was relieved by Captain Irving of the British Guiana Militia at 3:30 pm. By 4:00 pm order was completely restored and the situation was almost back to normal.

In his report to the Colonial Office, Governor Thomson stressed that no more rounds were fired than was absolutely necessary to check the rushes. In summing up the situation he noted:

Deeply as I deplore this loss of life and injuries inflicted on so many unfortunate people, I wish to make it quite clear that had these crowds, numbering several thousands of persons, been allowed to disregard the proclamations and the orders to disperse, and to force a way into the city in defiance of the police, the authority of the Government and its officers and their power to control the situation would, in my opinion, have been so impaired and the numbers and capacity for mischief of the rioters so increased, that the entire city might have been in the gravest danger of being given over to wholesale rioting accompanied, as was the case in 1905, by general attacks on Europeans, pillage, and probably by incendiaries. [153]

The Governor was convinced that Captain Ramsay, in handling a difficult situation and carrying out his orders, showed "marked forbearance as well as ability. " [154] In conjunction with Mr. Legge, Captain Ramsay was seen to have done his utmost to induce the crowds to behave peaceably and to disperse. It was stated that he only resorted to extreme measure after the safety of the men under his command and also the city was endangered. [155]

Acting under the Governor's orders, the Attorney General appointed Mr. George R. Reid J.P., on April, 1924 to hold an inquiry into the deaths of the twelve workers at Ruimveldt bridge. At the end of the hearings, Reid concluded:

In my opinion the order to fire by Captain Ramsay was given on a lawful occasion as a matter of necessity and it was the only course open to him at the time to prevent further felonies being perpetrated and to protect the lives of members of the force under his command. It was only begun at the last moment and was conducted without recklessness or negligence. If he had done less he would have been neglecting his duty and he stopped the fire at the earliest possible moment consistent with that duty. [156]

After the shooting at Ruimveldt, Critchlow, on behalf of the union, issued a statement to the workers. He blamed the 'non-unionists' for much of the disorder which surfaced during the workers' strike and demonstration. A general call was made for the workers to resume work. Within a day of the shooting, the majority of the workers in Georgetown and on the East Bank, reluctantly returned to work. Neither the sugar workers nor the dock workers of the city scored any immediate gains from the action they had taken. Once again, the state machinery was firm and merciless in dealing with the workers.

^{though}
The workers were disappointed and the movement suffered a setback, however, they were not defeated. The next chapter explores the way they continued the struggle through sabotage and other forms of covert activities. At the extra-parliamentary forum the BGLU and the BGEIA continued street corner meetings and public demonstrations in pursuit of collective bargaining legislation and trade union recognition.

FOOTNOTES

1. In 1924, Pln. Ruimveldt was a ward of Georgetown, situated at the south-western side of the city.
2. The bridge spanned the canal which was the boundary between Georgetown and the East Bank of Demerara.
3. For details see [NAG] Ruimveldt Inquiry 1924, in Minutes of an Inquiry into the deaths of thirteen persons who died from the result of bullet wounds received at Ruimveldt, British Guiana on 3rd April, 1924.
4. PRO: C.O.111/652 see the report of George Rodhouse Reid, J.P. LLB...Stipendiary Magistrate, Georgetown, and Coroner. Presented on July 5, 1924.
5. Ashton Chase, A History of Trade Unionism in Guyana 1900-1961. (Georgetown: New Guyana Company Ltd., 1964.) p. 66.
6. Ibid., p. 67.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., see also extract of Daily Argosy April 2, 1924 in PRO: C.O.111/20598, April 13, 1924. (Enclosure 26)
9. PRO: C.O.111/652, April 13, 1924.
10. Extract of Daily Argosy April 2, 1924 in PRO: Enclosure 26 of C.O.111/652 April 13, 1924.
11. Ibid.
12. PRO: C.O.111/652 April 13, 1924.
13. Ibid., see Enclosure 26.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. PRO: C.O.111/652 April 13, 1924. The 'East Coast' train provided a service for the villages along the East Coast of Demerara, between Georgetown and Rosignol-on the West Bank of the Berbice River.
18. Ibid., the Steamer service across the Demerara River, is an important link between Georgetown and communities along the West Bank and West Coast Demerara.
19. Ibid.

20. Extract from the Daily Argosy April 3, 1924. in PRO: C.O.111/652. (Enc.26)

21. Many businessmen and Senior Government Officials lived in this section of the capital. Also, most of the city's leading hotels and guest houses were located along Main Street.

22. PRO: see Enc. 26 of C.O.111/652.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. See Chase, p. 65.

28. Linda Peake, " *The Development and Role of Women's Political Organisations in Guyana.*" in Janet H. Momsen (ed.) Women and Change in the Caribbean (Kingston: Ian Randele, 1993). pp. 110-111, the women's work included 'needlework of every description, fancy work, baskets, articles in wood, raffia and felt work, novelties for Christmas, guava jelly, hot sauce, tamarind syrup.'

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. For example the prominent role of Nanny Grigg and other women in the planning and execution of the 1816 Slave Revolt in Barbados. See for example H. Beckles, Black Rebellion in Barbados: The Struggle Against Slavery 1627-1838. (Bridgetown: Antilles Publications, 1984.

32. Attention can be drawn to the role of 'Salamea' from the 'weeding gang' during a major disturbance at Plantation Friends in Berbice, during 1903. See for example Robert Moore, " East Indians and Negroes in British Guiana 1838-1880." (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Essex, 1970). Also, there was a significant female participation in the 1905 Ruimveldt workers incident, see Nehusi M.A. thesis.

33. See Martin, " *Marcus Garvey the Great Emancipator...*"

34. Extract from Daily Argosy, April 3, 1924.

35. The Governor's Report on the Ruimveldt Incident in PRO: C.O.111/652 April 13, 1924.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., by 3:00pm a proclamation was issued authorising the closure of all spirit shops and outlawing all forms of open-air gatherings. See below for details.
38. PRO: C.O.111/652 April 13, 1924.
39. PRO: C.O.111/652 April 1, 1924, telegram from Thomson to Secretary of State.
40. PRO: C.O.111/652 April 1, 1924, Commander- in-Chief of North America and West Indies to Admiralty.
41. " Professor" Osborne was a charismatic leader of the BGLU, see PRO: Enc. 26 of C.O.111/652 April 13, 1924.
42. This spacious green, located in a strategic part of the city, developed over the years as a park, meeting place and a famous cricket venue.
43. PRO: Enc. 26 of C.O.111/652.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid., in extract from Daily Argosy April 2, 1924, also Chase, A History of... pp. 68-69.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. This is the Central Police Station in Georgetown. In 124 most of the Senior Military Officers were based at this station.
49. See extract from Daily Chronicle April 2, 1924 in PRO: C.O.111/652.
50. Ibid., this document was issued by His Excellency's Command and signed by R. Popham Lobb, the Colonial Secretary.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. See PRO: Enc. 26 of C.O.111/652.
55. Ibid., after a meeting between Critchlow and the Mayor of Georgetown, the decision was taken to make the Town Hall available to the labour union for a meeting.
56. Ibid.
57. In April 1924, the unionists comprised 1,129 workers, of whom only 418 were financial members.

58. Chase, p. 69.

59. Ibid.

60. Water Street is a major commercial centre and shopping thoroughfare in Georgetown.

61. PRO: Enc. 26 of C.O.111/652.

62. Ibid.

63. In the 1920s the members of this organisation were very vocal on issues affecting the welfare of the black section of the population. In April 1924, the 'Immigration Scheme' was one of the main issues on its agenda. See chapter v.

64. Chase, A History of... p. 68.

65. Ibid., p. 69.

66. Ibid.

67. PRO: C.O.111/652.

68. PRO: Enc. 26 of C.O.111/652.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

71. PRO: C.O.111/652, Enc. 11. 2,000 copies of this notice were distributed throughout the city.

72. Ibid., Enc. 26. Note the presence of a significant number of East Indians and women at this meeting.

73. Extract from Daily Argosy April 3, 1924, in PRO: C.O.111/652 Enc. 26.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid., Critchlow had the supreme confidence of the workers at that stage. This fact was known to the employers and the government. They took advantage of this confidence as they knew it was only Critchlow who was capable of getting the workers to resume work on their terms. See for example Chase, A History... p. 69.

78. Extract from Daily Argosy in C.O.111/652 April 3, 1924, Enc.26.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.

81. Firemen from the vessel 'Chiguecetto' were used to carry on the tasks of the workers of the electric power station.

82. PRO: C.O.111/652, see Governor's Report.

83. Daily Argosy April 3, 1924 Enc. 26 of C.O.111/652.

84. PRO: C.O.111/652, see letter from Colonial Secretary to Critchlow, April 5, 1924 (Enc. 21.)

85. Ibid.

86. Ibid., also PRO: C.O.111/652 April 4, 1924, see letter from the shipping owners and agents to Critchlow (Enc. 20.)

87. Ibid., see Critchlow to Thomson April 4, 1924.

88. According to the Governor, arbitration as a means of adjusting differences is an expedient for which in theory there is much to be said, but experience has shown that in practice it rarely fulfils its object.

89. PRO: C.O.111/652, Governor's Report.

90. Ibid.

91. See [NAG] Minutes of the eight meeting of the Commission appointed to enquire into and report on the conditions of employment and rates of wages paid to stevedore, wharfmen and labourers engaged in loading and unloading vessels, held in the Court of Policy, April 23, 1924.

92. PRO: C.O.114/188, British Guiana Combined Court Annual Session, 1924.

93. Governor's Report in C.O.111/652.

94. PRO: C.O.111/188.

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid.

99. H. Beynon (ed.) Digging Deeper: Issues in the Miners Strike. (London: 1985.)

100. Ibid.

101. Ibid., also V.I. Lenin, " On Strike " in Collected Works. Vol. 5 (London: 1960 [1899].)

102. See for example the evidence of D.I. Bovell-Jones, Captain Ramsay, Kawall, Aaron Britton and many of the workers from the East Bank Demerara, in the 'Ruimveldt Inquiry.'

103. Ibid.

104. See [NAG] Report of Mr. G.E. Anderson, Manager of Plns. Providence, Farm and Diamond, April 12, 1924.

105. [NAG] Testimony of Jiau in the Ruimveldt Inquiry.

106. Anderson's Report.

107. [NAG] See testimony of Kawall, D.I. Bovell-Jones and Captain Ramsay in the Ruimveldt Inquiry.

108. The official name of the Manager's residence.

109. This was a strategy employed to guarantee the effectiveness of the strike action.

110. The Immigration Agent General was affectionately referred to as "Crosby." Immigration Agent Crosby served in Guiana for twenty two years. He stood in the tradition of colonial paternalism, and worked to uphold the reputation that his office served the indentured labourers *in loco parentis*. However, this was too liberal for the plantation system and the Governors under whom he served gave him little support. It is commonplace in Guiana that all subsequent Immigration Agents came to be colloquially referred to by immigrants as "Crosby." According to the 'driver' from Diamond, indentured men would take their complaint to 'Crosby' before going to see the Manager. "I have seen them go to Crosby since 1917. Usually the whole gang goes...They take tools, shovel, sticks and cutlasses as they left the estate." See testimony of Prince Edwards, 'driver' (or foreman) at Diamond Estate, in the Ruimveldt Inquiry.

111. See for example, Captain Ramsay's Report in PRO: C.O.111/652 Enc. 15, also the testimony of Messrs Legge and Kawall in the Ruimveldt Inquiry.

112. Testimony of Boodnee in the Ruimveldt Inquiry.

113. Testimony of Nallapareddy in the Ruimveldt Inquiry.

114. Ibid.

115. Testimony of Kawall.

116. Ibid.

117. Ibid.

118. Ibid.

119. Usually under a large tree near the centre of the village or at a strategic point where the 'Middle-walk' dam converged with the Public Road.

120. Several estate workers testified that 'strange black men' from the city visited them at their work sites. See the Ruimveldt Inquiry...

121. Joseph Robertson, a resident of Little Diamond (on the East Bank) testified that on Monday 31st March, on his way from the hospital in Georgetown, he was given a roll of hand bills by a black man who was distributing them in Camp Street. He was instructed to pass them on. He distributed four to some people at Pln. Peters' Hall. Three were given to an Indian and one to a Chinese. See Ruimveldt Inquiry...

122. Many of the East Indians who arrived in the country as indentured immigrants were housed in barrack type ranges called 'logies'. These quarters were retained by the workers at the end of their contract. Members of these 'logies' came together to form 'shovel gangs' on the estates.

123. A small group of workers working as a well co-ordinated unit. Their task was mainly related to the digging and clearing of ditches and drainage canals in the estates.

124. The members of these gangs were usually occupants of the same range or logy. They moved from one plantation to the other to perform digging contracts.

125. See the testimony of Prince Edwards.

126. Testimony of Nallapareddy.

127. Daily Argosy April 2, 1924. According to the Governor, Critchlow adopted the wording of this hand bill from a similar document which was distributed in England. See PRO: C.O.111/652 Enc. 1.

128. [NAG] Memorandum of information obtained from District Inspector Bovell-Jones April 10, regarding action taken on the East Bank on the 2nd and 3rd April, 1924 in PRO: C.O.111/652 Enc. 29.

129. Ibid.

130. Ibid.

131. Ibid., it was customary for the estate workers to walk with sticks and agricultural implements during their visits to the city to see 'Crosby.'

132. Ibid., 'Big Manja' or 'Big Manager' was the title given to Mr. Anderson by the estate workers. This was because he was the senior Manager of Plns. Providence, Farm and Diamond.

133. D.I. Bovell-Jones' Report.
134. Ibid.
135. Ibid.
136. Report of Capt. R. Ramsay, the Black Watch Staff Officer, Local Forces to Commandant Local Forces, British Guiana in C.O.111/652 Enc. 15.
137. Ibid.
138. Ibid., (Special police department where riot police officers are kept on call to the scene of riots and other forms of civil disturbance.
139. Ibid.
140. Ibid.
141. Evidence of Ramprashad in the Ruimveldt Inquiry.
142. Ibid.
143. Capt. Ramsay's Report.
144. Ibid.
145. Evidence of Ramprashad.
146. Ibid.
147. Ibid.
148. Capt. Ramsay's Report. (On the Coastal Region of Guyana, houses and other buildings are usually built on stilts as a precaution against seasonal flooding.)
149. Ibid.
150. Ibid.
151. Ibid.
152. Ibid.
153. Governor's Report on the Ruimveldt Incident.
154. Ibid.
155. Ibid.
156. See Coroner's Report on the Ruimveldt Workers' Incident in PRO: C.O.111/652 July 5, 1924.

CHAPTER VI

The Consequences of the Workers' Incident: The Immediate Aftermath

Sky only blossomed because men grew tall from
the edge of the water where stones fell and sank.

Martin Carter-`Voices:' Georgetown Journal p. 65.

The Ruimveldt Workers' Incident of 1924 is a demonstration of workers' resistance to low wages, exploitation at the work place and deplorable living and working conditions. This form of resistance is not unique in labour relations in Guiana. In all the unfree labour regimes which were introduced to satisfy colonial labour requirements, the working people have resisted exploitation in all of its manifestations and attempted to secure working conditions which were satisfactory to them.

This chapter examines some of the immediate impact of the incident upon working people's struggle for wage increase, union recognition and improved conditions at the place of employment. The first section is an analysis of the reaction of the officials to the incident. This is followed by an examination of the state of employment and the level of wages paid to the waterfront workers in Georgetown and the estate workers on the East Bank. Finally, the role of the BGLU and the BGEIA in organising and educating the working people in the continuation of the struggle.

Reaction of the Authorities

The weeks and months following the incident saw the government desperately seeking ways of justifying the action of the military in every stage of the dispute. Letters and telegrams to the Colonial Office and, most of all, the Governor's

Despatches and Colonial Office Report, reflected a unanimous verdict of the 'rightness' of the way the authorities dealt with the 'threatening and offensive' members of an unruly and 'unlawful' mob. [1]

There was also the determination to get the message across to the working people that such an event should never be repeated in British Guiana. This message was given effect in a national display of force and tightened security. Personnel of the police force and military units were significantly increased. [2] Special constables and police officers on patrol in the grounds of several plantations were a common sight, and police presence at labour meetings and large workers' rallies were more noticeable than in the past. Military activities also included close surveillance of the activities of labour leaders.

The Governor and other officials conceded that the Ruimveldt Incident " had taken Government unawares " [3] because the activities of the working people were ineffectively monitored. In response, the Governor appointed a Committee to explore methods designed to " overhaul the machinery for collecting intelligence " [4] on working people's activities. It is instructive that labour was not represented on this Committee.

In its report, the Committee concluded that the Office of the Immigration Agent--this institution which East Indian immigrant workers trusted and relied upon for guidance and representation over the years--should play a leading role in intelligence gathering. The Department should, as a matter of routine, pass to the police department information on the question of unrest or disturbance among the East Indian

population. [5] In addition, the Police Department should acquaint the Immigration Department " about Indians and Negroes if it should appear that unrest or propaganda among the latter might tend to produce similar results among East Indians." [6] Information obtain had to be recorded and kept by " a European Officer in each Department and should not in any circumstances be entrusted or shewn (sic) to native subordinates." [7] The effectiveness of working people's unity was obvious to the authorities and these measures were directed at foiling attempts at future collaboration among members of African and East Indian racial sections.

In addition, the need to justify the actions of the police during the incident was also given priority. The activities of these officials resulted in the loss of human lives, therefore, a lawful justification had to be given to the Colonial Office for this occurrence.

The need for such accountability was based upon the nature of the relationship between the colony and the metropolis. The most distinctive feature of this relationship is that the colonial political system is a subordinate system, being controlled from the metropolis in most aspects of its economic and political life, and some of the most important aspects of its social life. The colony is penetrated at all levels of decision making by the metropolis. Also, metropolitan influence is evident in less formal areas. [8]

Closely connected to this relationship is the presence of structures performing the function of authoritative decision making. In this process the local population was denied the

representation which their superior number would guaranteed them in a democracy. The decisions taken in the local legislature was strongly influenced by the metropolis through the presence of the Governor. [9]

From a very early period in the history of colonial development, the theory had been held that there was a common-law rule that legislation by a colonial legislature was void if repugnant to the laws of England. This rule was apparently based upon the assumption that there were certain fundamental principles of English law which no colonial law could violate. [10] Although this rule was generally accepted in the practice of colonial legislation, it was very subjective in its implementation because the scope of these principles, for a significant period of colonialism, was by no means clearly defined. [11]

Within the colonial state, the actions of the officials were conducted within the framework of law. Colonial Officials were at pains to dispel the assumption that it was arbitrary rule. Since a code of law and the values which it expresses does contain within itself a concept of right which, at least in theory, transcends the interests of groups and individuals within the society. Subscribing to this code of law in a colonial setting, occasioned certain contradictions in the values and actions of certain officials. [12] Often these laws are in place to satisfy the authorities of the metropolis. In the colonies, the major concern was in fostering the material prosperity of the white ruling class in the protection of their private ownership of capital.

In his report to the Secretary of State, the Governor stressed that Captain Ramsay—the Black Watch Staff Officer who gave the order to shoot into the crowd at Ruimveldt bridge— "...in handling a difficult situation...only resorted to extreme measures after the safety of the men under his command and also of the city was endangered. " [13] Reid, the Coroner, [14] also expressed his support for the action of Captain Ramsay. [15] The mother country supported this position when the Colonial Office " gave its full support to all action taken. " [16]

The evidence revealed that the attitude of the officials was strongly influenced by a deep-rooted fear of the local population. This fear, which was largely unfounded, was created by a lack of knowledge of the character of the citizens which was a result of social stratification and residential separation with contact mainly at the place of production. This arrangement gave rise to the emergence of unfair stereotyping and inaccurate analysis of the motives of the working people. Even very senior officials in the colonies subscribed to the notion that any form of protest by the working people should be met with a display of force instead of dialogue and compromise. [17]

Governor Thomson authorised the Colonial Secretary to take whatever precaution necessary to prevent the crowd from entering the city because: " East Indian and Negro in the mass are not open to reason or argument when excited..." [18] This statement is a reflection of the Governor's disregard for the working people's ability and willingness to negotiate with the employers. The statement is also an indication of the deep concern of the officials over the way estate workers and city

workers were able to co-ordinate their activities to inflict maximum disruption to sugar production and export. In a colony where the employers and the Colonial Officials depended upon working people's division [19] as a major factor in dealing with incidents of a similar nature, workers, irrespective of race and occupation, united in a common cause, was a disturbing development in the opinion of the authorities.

From a very early stage in the protest, there was widespread military presence within the city and throughout the East Bank. [20] This forceful attitude and 'fear' of the working people, influenced the way the Inquiry was conducted and the nature of the report the Governor submitted to the Colonial Office.

The Inquiry

George B. Reid J.P. was appointed on April 7, 1924 under section 19 of the Coroner's Ordinance, No. 6 of 1887, to hold an inquiry into the deaths of the workers at Ruimveldt. [21] Reid had legal training but because of his association and vested interest (a solicitor of a prominent legal firm), it was difficult for him to guarantee to undertake his duties with a high degree of objectivity.

Thorne, a prominent leader of the people, sent a petition to the Colonial Office pointing out that Reid was unfit to conduct the inquiry as he was a private solicitor and three of the attorneys appearing before him on behalf of the police, the military and the estates, were members of Reid's firm. [22] It is probable that any Judge of the High Court in Guiana who would share the prejudices of the rest of the white community, would have found that the shooting was necessary to stop the threat.

At the same time it is possible that a man of greater judicial experience would have been rather more guarded in his dismissal of all evidence contrary to the official position. [23] It is also instructive that Governor Thomson found it necessary to prejudice the inquiry by appointing Reid.

The degree of prejudice against the working people's view which characterised the hearing was reflected in the way Reid attempted to discredit Kawall, Ramprashad and Aaron-Britton, as credible witnesses. Reid noted in his report:

With regard to the witnesses probably both Kawall and Ramprashad were too frightened to be accurate observers but it is clear that Ramprashad (who says 'I gradually left and walked sideways') had got clear away some time before the firing and that what he is testifying to is mere hearsay gleaned from others. [24]

With reference to Aaron-Britton's statement, he had this to say: "...he lied over many points...It is a charitable view to take that he also was in a state of abject terror at the time and incapable of observing accurately or consecutively." [25] They were dismissed with the following remark: "It is clear from a consideration of all the evidence that Kawall, Ramprashad and Britton were all in scared excitable state and...they refused to get into the heart of the mob for fear of the consequences..." [26]

Even in relation to the information given to the international community concerning the incident, care was taken that the 'correct' version was presented. In a despatch to the Governor, the Secretary of State stressed the importance of "correcting as far as possible any erroneous statements which may be published or intended for publication." [27]

Such precaution assumed greater urgency during the period because of the presence of a delegation under Sir J.J.Nunan, in India for the purpose of obtaining labourers to settle in Guiana. [28] The concern was that the death of East Indian workers would have prejudiced the outcome of the Indian Colonisation Scheme. It was therefore necessary for the authorities to convince the Indian government that Indian nationals lost their lives under circumstances in which officers acted in a legal and objective way.

In addition to these immediate precautions, the authorities, in Guiana and the mother country, were compelled into undertaking a closer examination of the labour legislation which existed during the period. This was because of the trend witnessed in working people's relations and also, the momentum which was created in the popular demand for reform.

Workers' Response, Wages and Working Condition: Georgetown Docks and the Estates

The dock workers were the last group of workers in Georgetown who returned to work after the incident. By April 3, the majority of the workers attached to the Department of Transport, Georgetown 'Water Works' and other service sectors returned to work. However, the dock workers assembled each day at the entrance to the dock yard and along Water Street. [29]

The resumption of work and peaceful gatherings throughout the city served to disguise a series of covert activities directed at the white community. Between April 3rd and 8th, four attempts were made to set fire to private premises in Georgetown and on the East Coast of Demerara. These included the residence

of the Manager of the Electric Light Company (in Georgetown), those of Mr. G.R. Reid, ex-Stipendiary Magistrate and Coroner of the Ruimveldt Incident, Dr. W.G. Boase and the Golf Club (on the East Coast). [30]

On the homes of Mr. Reid and Dr. Boase were found anonymous notices threatening revenge on the part of the East Indian and African community on account of the shooting at Ruimveldt. [31] The following is an example of these notices:

**TO ALL EUROPEANS!
WHY, WE HAVE DONE IT, BECAUSE YOU HAVE
SHOT OUR FELLOW MEN EAST INDIANS AND NEGROES, AND
THROUGHOUT DEMERARA, WE ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH
SHOOTING
AND ARE SEEKING REVENGE. [32]**

These activities were extended to the sugar plantations on both sides of the Demerara River. On April 5th fifteen acres of sugar cane were set on fire at Plantation Diamond (East Bank Demerara) and on the night of April 6th, sixteen acres of cane were destroyed by fire at Plantation Uitvlugt (West Coast Demerara). [33] Commenting upon the incident at Uitvlugt, the Governor noted: " This is believed to have been the work of negroes from the neighbouring village." [34]

The response of the authorities has been to maintain a show of force in the city and on the plantations. The Governor was convinced that the deployment of police and military personnel was largely responsible for keeping arson and other acts of sabotage at a minimum. In response, he ordered that the Militia Proclamation be extended so that the members on the active list may be " recalled for duty at a moment's notice should necessity arise." [35]

Other precautions taken included a request to the Commander-in-Chief to allow the H.M.S. "Curlew" (the British Naval Battle Ship) to remain on stand by until April 14th. Restrictions on the activities of retail spirit shops were relaxed but not removed entirely. It is instructive to note that at a time when unemployment was widespread and capital was needed for investment designed to promote jobs, the Governor was prepared to take a vote in the Combined Court to cover the costs (estimated to be in excess of £4, 000) of these measures. [36]

In response to the covert acts of arson on the property of members of the white community, a total of 77 arrests were made -41 in Georgetown and 36 on the East Bank. In addition, police officers moved around the City and rural communities in a bid to obtain the names and identity of individuals who were associated with these activities. [37]

Unemployment and Labour Relations

Georgetown:

Low wages, unemployment and the rising cost of living were central issues in the workers' demands during the incident. The Governor and the employers refused to acknowledge the extent to which these issues affected the working people. [38] Neither the government nor the Chamber of Commerce indicated that they were considering the workers' demands for wage increase.

In his report on the incident, the Governor took care to stress the importance of the schemes which the government established to improve the quality of life and provide employment for the working people in several areas of the Coastal Region of the country. He noted:

...the main questions which have engaged Government's attention during the past twelve months have been directly concerned with the improvement of the conditions under which they live and work.

To that end the most far-reaching and costly schemes ever undertaken in the Colony, apart from Sea Defences, have been initiated, including the provision of a modern sewage system and surface drainage and better roads for the city Georgetown...the purchase and parcelling out of an estate of 4,600 acres in small holdings for peasant farmers in Essequibo... [39]

The evidence indicates that these ventures did not achieve the level of success that was anticipated by the government. The Sewerage scheme which started in 1924 was welcomed by the working people. However, while its initial impact was favourable, very soon local workers faced active competition from workers who arrived from several territories of the West Indies. Chase noted that " the Union had to agitate for preference to be given to local labourers over labourers who arrived from the West Indian Islands." [40]

In relation to the land settlement scheme, the books indicated a significant loss after the first year of operation. While the concept-support for peasant cultivation- was progressive, poor management and the inability of many small farmers to repay loans given by the government, militated against the success of the venture.

For example, the receipts for 1924 amounted to \$58,609.86 against an expenditure for the same period of \$93,936.97. [41] In a report on the operation of the scheme the Committee of Management drew attention to

...the fact that the Scheme had not up to the present achieved its original purpose of providing employment for the labouring population on the Essequibo Coast by the establishment of cane farming on a co-operative basis. [42]

The issue relating to the failure of the scheme was also raised before the Combined Court by the Elected Members. The following statement was issued:

It appears to some of us that the Scheme is not fulfilling the high anticipations formed by those who advocated its adoption, and it seems therefore desirable that Your Excellency [the Governor] should appoint some Board of Enquiry to pursue investigations on the spot. [43]

Many small farmers faced the possibility of losing sums of money they invested into the scheme because crops failed or returns poor. There was also the additional financial burden of repaying loans which were taken for land development and the purchase of *ratoons*. [44]

It is significant to note that when rural schemes such as the 'Essequibo Land Settlement' failed, unemployed and dispossessed workers moved to the city, in the process increasing the ranks of unemployed urban workers and creating greater demands upon the city infrastructure such as sewerage and housing units. In Georgetown during 1924, these aspects of the city were stretched to the limit.

It was not unusual under these conditions for the government to increase existing taxes or implement new ones in an attempt to raise revenue. In keeping this policy, at the Annual Session of the Combined Court-towards the end of 1924-the Governor announced that the government must consider the contingency of an increase in taxation to meet an anticipated deficit of \$303,453 in the budget. [45]

The Electives noted that " the community had reach its utmost limit of tax-bearing in any direction." [46] Making direct

reference to the causes of the Ruimveldt Incident-in relation to the activities in Georgetown- attention was drawn to (i) the acute housing shortage in the city and (ii) the difficulty of the working classes to balance their weekly budgets. [47] It was therefore with great surprise that at the first sitting of the Combined Court after the Incident, " there was no indication of the adoption of some Government policy " designed to address these issues. [48]

Unemployment in the city which peaked in late 1923 and the early months of 1924 [49] remained at the same level after the incident. The labour union continued to organise demonstrations and public meetings. Workers were also dissatisfied with the wage paid by the Sewerage Scheme (the most recent project in the city during 1924). The scheme paid the prevailing rates of the Town Council and PWD (Public Works Department), " which was very small and insufficient for reasonable existence. " [50]

The Governor's response to labour demands was influenced by the position adopted by the employers. The Shipping Agents claimed that the main reason for the workers problems was that many of the wharf and stevedore labourers were unable to get sufficient work to provide adequate earnings " because of the large number of persons who flocked the waterfront." [51] In his report to the Secretary of State, the Governor informed him that " the evidence which has been taken goes to confirm the view expressed by the employers...that the work of the port is not sufficient to support the number of casual labourers who endeavour to earn a living at it." [52]

Although there is some justification in this position-given

the rate of workers' migration from the country districts-the most fundamental issue in relation to the workers plight was their inability to meet the cost of food, housing and other needs on existing wages. A vast section of the working people within the city was forced to live at a mere subsistence level and occupied dwellings which were overcrowded and lacked the necessary sanitary facilities. [53] The table below gives a breakdown of the cost of daily and weekly meals for selected individuals in Georgetown during 1924:

TABLE VIII

Cost of Daily, Weekly and Miscellaneous Necessities

	Mr. J.L. Lewis Secretary Labour Union		Mr. E. Prescott Stevedore	Mr. Wood Davis Secretary Chamber of Commerce	
	Daily	Sunday		Daily	Sunday
Morning Tea	10 cts.	13 cts.	for self, wife and four children	8 cts.	9 cts.
Breakfast	20 "	34 "		12.5 "	20 "
Lunch	4 "	-		4 "	-
Dinner	21 "	11 "		13.5 "	8 "
Daily Total	55"	58"	88 cts	38 "	37 "
Weekly Total	\$3.30+58=\$3.88		\$6.16	\$2.28+37=\$2.65	
Miscellaneous	.67 cts.			42 cts.	
Total	\$4.55		\$6.16	\$3.07	

Source: Minutes of the Eight Meeting of the Commission Appointed to Enquire Into and Report on the Conditions of Employment and Rates of Wages Paid to Stevedores, Wharfmen and Labourers Engaged in the Loading and Unloading of Vessels. Held in the Court of Policy, Wednesday, April 23, 1924.

At the existing rate of wages for Stevedores-\$1.60 per day since 1923-a considerable part had to be spent on necessities. It should be considered also that other categories of workers on the docks such as *Wharf Men* and *Wharf Boys* were paid at a lower scale (Men-packers-from \$1.12 to \$1.44 and Boys-truckers-from 84 cents to \$1.20 per day). [54] The weekly earnings of workers fluctuated because many secured employment for only a part of the

working week. During 1924, many labourers on the waterfront worked approximately one and a half days per week. [55]

The workers' dissatisfaction was even greater because they were not convinced that the government was taking any positive action to alleviate their condition. The Governor displayed a tendency towards suppressing workers militancy rather than exploring avenues to lower cost of living and generally improving the quality of their livelihood through the creation of employment. After rejecting Critchlow's call for the setting up of an Arbitration Board, [56] the Governor made the decision to appoint a Commission to Enquire into working conditions on the waterfront. [57]

The Commission submitted its report on April 29, 1924. Chase noted that the report " did not appreciably relieve the situation." [58] Such was the degree of dissatisfaction over the limitations of the Commission's findings, separate reports were submitted by Messrs Critchlow and Grimes-on behalf of the union-and riders were submitted by two Elected members of the Combined Court. [59]

Conditions on the Estates

After the Incident, estate workers reluctantly returned to work. They were disappointed that the estate authorities did not meet with their representatives to discuss conditions in the fields and on the factory floor. Unemployed workers and others who were on part-time employment assembled at the entrance to the estates to discuss the problems they faced and encouraged workers to continue the strike. [60]

The wages paid on the estates were comparatively lower than

wage rates in the city. The Labour Union campaigned for estate workers to be paid on an equal basis with other labouring people of the country. [61] Although this campaign did not improve the wages paid to estate workers, it brought many many rural workers into contact with the BGLU and also the way the city workers organised for imcreased wages and better working conditions.

The table below presents figures of daily and weekly earnings of different categories of field workers on the estates between 1913 and 1925:

TABLE IX

Year	Average Earnings Per Day				Average Earnigs Per Week		
	Shovel Men	Male Weeders	Female Weeders	Average % of working day lost	Shovel Men	Male Weeders	Female Weeders
	cts.	cts.	cts.		\$	\$	\$
1913	-	27	17	25	-	1.21	.76
1920	81	71	56	25	3.64	3.19	2.52
1921	56	50	39	30	2.35	2.10	1.63
1922	44	39	32	27	1.89	1.67	1.37
1923	50	43	34	25	2.25	1.93	1.53
1924	51	44	34	26	2.44	1.93	1.49
1925	51	44	33	25	2.29	1.98	1.48

**The weekly earnings have been obtained by multiplying the average amount of work per day by the number of days worked per week, which is approximately 4 1/2.*

Source: [PRO] C.O.111/663.

During the weeks following the Incident under-employment reached new levels on the estates. The table reveals that the general pattern for the period (1913-1925) was for workers to be effectively employed for an average of 4 1/2 days per week.

During 1924, however, this was reduced to 2 1/2 days. [62] The low rate of wages on the estates can be gauged by the fact that in 1924 'Shovel Men' (an 'elite' group on the estate) earned an average of \$2.44 per week, compared with 'Wharf Men' who earned \$1.12 to \$1.44 per day.

Another factor which was the source of major concern among estate workers, was the method of fixing wages. It was the common practise for jobs performed by cane cutters, shovel men, weeders and other categories of estate workers, were conducted by 'piece' or 'task.' [63] Problems relating to this type of job allotment were widely discussed during the period before and after the workers' Incident. For example, while the Governor acknowledged that payment for work by the piece was the rule in the colony, [64] the union "opposed piece work on the Sugar Estates as being a form of work that permitted the employers to extract the greatest amount of surplus value out of the workers." [65]

The task was usually an amount of work that the worker was required to perform during the working day for an agreed sum of money. For example, in relation to the digging of cane holes, the average task varied from eighty to 150 holes, depending upon the season and the nature of the soil (on lighter soil more holes were demanded for the task). [66] The nature and price of the task varied from day to day. This was usually decided between the worker or the 'gang' and the Overseer, after lengthy bargaining.

The task might require a working day of fifteen hours or more for the weaker or less experienced worker, though a good worker could get through his task in half the time. An early critic of tasking, Governor Wodehouse, informed the Duke of

Newcastle that task work was " ... a device for obtaining a certain amount of work without any trouble of superintendence?" [67]

During 1924, the estate workers on the East Bank lodged a number of complains in relation to this system. For example a resident of Pln. Providence recalled that the Overseer from Pln. Diamond deliberately added to the 'weeders' and 'diggers' tasks during the weeks following the Incident. [68] In addition, the drought which the area experienced during that year (1924), made digging particularly difficult. A number of diggers suffered wage reduction or received no wages because the Overseer was dissatisfied with the depth of the cane holes they were contracted to dig. [69]

In addition, questions relating to the 'starting time' and the distance of the 'work ground' from the estate 'yard,' were also the source of conflict between workers and Overseers. For example, it was not unusual for workers (cane cutters, shovel men and weeders) to walk for five to seven miles in order to get to the work area. At times, 'difficult workers' were deliberately assigned to 'distant fields.' The workers argued that the time spent on the job was to be recorded from the time they reported for work rather than when they arrived at the work site.

Such acts against the workers contributed to much fluctuation in the amount of days they were able to work each week, the amount of time spent on tasks and the amount of money they earned at the end of the week. Their plight was compounded by the fact that the estate authorities were able to arbitrarily reduce wage rates. The absence of a minimum wage, set by the

government, and the fact that in 1924 labour's point of view was unrepresented in the Court of Policy [70] added to the workers' inability to resort to constitutional means for solutions to their problems. This limitation was felt during the workers Incident and much priority was given to this question in the struggle after April 1924.

Labour Legislation

From the beginning of the 1920s and especially during the period 1922-24, the representatives of labour launched a determined struggle to get the authorities to implement legislation to regulate the conditions and terms of labour. The strategy employed included letters to local and British Officials, news paper articles and public demonstration. This aspect of the struggle was necessary because much of the issues-such as a eight hour working day, child labour, factory safety regulations, increased wages for every category of workers and legislation to implement a system of workmen's compensation-constituted the main demands presented by the workers during the Ruimveldt Incident but were inadequately addressed. [71]

Before 1916 the workers in Guiana enjoyed limited protection under the Workmen's Compensation Legislation which existed in England up to 1897. [72] However, this English common law had a number of limitations and proved to be unpopular among the Guianese workers. For example, the master did not have full liability in the case of " injury to his servant caused by negligence of a fellow servant in common employment, that is injuries received from ordinary risk or accident. " [73]

In an attempt to remedy the hardship experienced by workingmen, the local legislature passed the '*Accidental Deaths and Workingmen's Injuries Ordinance, 1916*' in October 1916. [74] Under this Ordinance, the worker had the difficult task of presenting proof to establish his employers' liability. He found it difficult to establish whether negligence or "mischance" was the cause of his misfortune. [75]

After the Ruimveldt Incident, at least two attempts were made by the working people to get the government to update the legislation for workingmen's compensation. In response to representation made in 1926, the government "intimated that it did not propose to introduce such legislation." [76] In October 1929, Mr Crane, a member of the legislature, wrote a letter on behalf of the BGLU, requesting that the Secretary of State consider the question of "enactment in the colony of legislation on the principle of Workingmen's Compensation Act 1906." [77]

The approach to the mother country was influenced by the fact that in 1926 a Workingmen's Compensation Ordinance was enacted in the colony of Trinidad. [78] In addition, the BGLU felt that its request was justified in the light of the report of the British government in 1925 to the International Labour Office. In this report, the mother country made a commitment to favourably consider the implementation of Workingmen's Compensation Ordinance as applied to agricultural workers, in British Guiana, Grenada, St. Vincent and Trinidad and Tobago. [79]

In response to labour's request the government, on the advice of the Executive Council, expressed the opinion that the

current economic state of the colony did not warrant the liability of workingmen's compensation being imposed on the industrial interests especially in view of the fact that local companies were unable to obtain insurance in respect of any liability for workingmen's compensation. [80] There was widespread disappointment at the government's attitude since the issue of workingmen's compensation was seen by the workers as complementing their demand for increased wages.

The strike action as a means of obtaining increased wages was very appealing to workers since it was the strategy they could effectively use by direct action. However, in Guiana during the colonial period, this was not always the most efficient method of redistributing income. [81] Much of the wage increases secured by one group of workers often fell not on the employers but on other groups. This is because in general the employer combined labour with other factors in whatever proportion that proved to be cheapest at existing prices. Therefore when forced to increase wages, the employer reacted by using less labour per acre, and more capital, discharging some of his workers who will either become unemployed or forced into low paid temporary employment. [82] It is in this context that the workers quest for a minimum wage be evaluated. A minimum wage legislation had the potential of restricting the ability of the employers to adjust wages to meet their needs.

Labour leaders were aware of this and took steps to widen the sphere of trade unionism. The union should therefore be seen in its wider role of workers' solicitor, representing them in negotiations with the employers and increasing their status and

dignity. It was also their insurance company, protecting them against illness, accident and unemployment. Further it was the political machinery, through which they may hope to improve their condition by legislative action. [83]

The failure to gain a Workingmen's Compensation legislation, made it clear to the working people that a great part of their problem stemmed from their inability to influence the decisions which were made on their behalf by the government. In the late 1920s therefore, a major aspect of the struggle was directed at increasing working people's representation through an attempt to secure the entry of working people's delegates in the Elective section of the government.

Campaign for Working People's Representation

The collective show of force by workers in the 1924 workers' incident, like other acts of resistance, came as a result of years of exploitation and powerlessness in a society where their labour produced the wealth but they were not the ones who benefited from the goods and services it generated. The workers who were in the forefront of this struggle did not have the option to influence the conditions under which they laboured, neither could they determine the use put to the returns from their efforts.

Over the years, they became increasingly conscious of the nature of their exploitation. Higher levels of consciousness gave rise to an intensification of the struggle against the expatriate ruling class who owned the means of production. The effectiveness of these acts of resistance varied with the nature of leadership which they enjoyed and also the state of the social and political

developments taking place in the society.

The BGLU played an important role in this process. Village and community leaders, lawyers, teachers and other professionals also took an active role in mobilising working people. In addition the activities of the BGEIA complemented the work of the BGLU and community leaders. By 1924, the BGEIA, through its vibrant executive, was able to unite a vast section of the East Indian community by providing leadership and encouraging them to join in the struggle for greater working people's representation. Kawall, its President, played a leading role in keeping East Indian workers informed on a range of social and political issues. During the weeks leading to the Incident, Kawall and other leading members of the Association presided over a series of meetings in the communities along the East Bank. At these gatherings matters relating to workers' grievances on the estates were discussed. In addition, workers were instructed on the way they should approach labour negotiations. After the Incident, the BGEIA continued its work on the estates and in Georgetown.

Organisations such as the BGEIA and the BGLU enjoyed much popularity among the workers because they formed part of a vibrant movement which advocated social, economic and political changes in the society. The BGLU was closely affiliated to the main political organisations of the period and addressed issues such as the extension of the franchise and the opening up of the interior among its demands. Leaders such as Thorne, Kawall and Critchlow were convinced that it was necessary for the working people to have greater representation in the legislature in order to bring workers' issues to the highest forum in the land. [84]

There was an increase in street corner meetings and public demonstrations aimed at mobilising and educating the workers and also to attract the attention of the authorities to the problems faced by the workers.

These activities were intensified after the Incident. The working people were clearly seen to express greater concern over the state of development in their country. The new attitude was demonstrated in their willingness to participate in political activities both at the formal and the extra-parliamentary levels.

The struggle was strengthened and widened through the participation of a large number of East Indians who completed their contractual obligations on the estates. [85] These individuals and the ever increasing ranks of second generation Indo-Guianese [86], transferred the patriotic zeal which members of a former generation displayed for India, to a deep aspiration to improve their livelihood in Guiana.

The impact of the East Indians in the public domain was also intensified by the increasing number of individuals from this community being able to satisfy the property criteria to cast the vote for members of the Legislature and Town Councils. The following table shows the upward trend in the number of East Indians who qualified for the franchise between 1913 and 1925.

TABLE X

Voters for the Legislature and Town Councils

	Legislature		Georgetown Council		New Amsterdam Council	
	E.I.	Non-E.I.	E.I.	Non-E.I.	E.I.	Non-E.I.
1913	223	4,515	20	499	Not Available	
1921	577	5,597	57	920	3	119
1925	1,122	7,825	94	1,491	20	155

Source: [PRO] C.O.111/663

The trend in working people's struggle which gained momentum through the leadership, the organisation and the level of consciousness displayed during the Incident, set in motion the process which resulted in a series of long-term developments in working peoples' struggle. Among these was the move by the Colonial Office to review labour relations in the country. This policy review represented an improvement to the *laissez faire* attitude adopted towards these issues in the past. In addition, the working people expressed their desire to give 'critical' support to the 'progressive' section of the Electives. They were actively involved in a 'nationalist' struggle which involved soliciting the co-operation and support of the various fractions of the working people, and forging closer ties between the trade unions and the movement for political reforms. These developments are examined in chapter vii.

FOOTNOTES

1. PRO: C.O.111/20598, April 30, 1924, Governor Thomson's Report on the Ruimveldt Workers' Incident.
2. Ibid., the Governor instructed the Commissioner of Police to swear in additional Special Constables and increase the number of Police Officers patrolling in the city and along the East Coast.
3. PRO: C.O.111/654, November 28, 1924, Thomson to SS.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., " Report of a Committee Appointed to Examine the Best Means of Overhauling the Machinery for Collecting Intelligence," November 7, 1924. The Committee consisted of the following: the Colonial Secretary (Chairman); Colonel F.H. Blackwood D.S.O., Inspector General of Police; Captain P.E.F. Cressall, M.C., Stipendiary Magistrate; Capt. R.J. Craig, M.C., Detective Inspector; and Mr. A.H. Hill, Immigration Agent.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves... see Introduction.
9. For a discussion of the Governor's role, see chapter iii.
10. Ann Spackman, " *Official Attitude and Official Violence: The Ruimveldt Massacre, Guiana, 1924,*" *Social and Economic Studies*, Vol. 22, 3, 1973.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. PRO: C.O.111/20598, Thomson's Report.
14. Ibid., also Coroner's Report in C.O.111/652 July 5, 1924.
15. Coroner's Report.
16. PRO: C.O.111/16970, Darnley to Thomson, April 8, 1924.
17. Governor's Report.
18. Ibid.
19. Planters employed a number of techniques to keep the working people divided. Certain groups were given special assistance to undertake business ventures or in the acquisition of land, see Michael J. Wagner, " *Structural Pluralism and the Portuguese in Nineteenth Cenury British Guiana: A Study in Historical Geography,*" Ph.D. Dissertation, McGill University, 1975.

20. Many civilians were sworn in as Special Constables to strengthen the military contingent, see the Governor's Report. For a discussion of the role of the military in suppressing popular resistance in Guiana, see Brian Moore, Race, Power and Social Segmentation in Colonial Society: Guiana After Slavery 1838-1891 (Philadelphia Penn: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1992.) pp. 203-206.

21. PRO: C.O.111/20598, George R. Reid was appointed Coroner on April 7, 1924, to Hold an Inquiry Into the Workers' Incident at Ruimveldt.

22. Spackman, " *Official Attitude...*" Despite their ultimate support of the Governor's action in appointing Reid to investigate the Ruimveldt shooting, the Colonial Office was considerably embarrassed by Reid's appointment since it violated the idea of equality before the law by employing, in a quasi-judicial position, a man who could be seen to be partial.

23. Ibid.

24. Coroner's Report.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. PRO: C.O.111/20598, SS to Thomson, September 24, 1924.

28. PRO: C.O.111/16970, Darnley to Nunan, April 8, 1924.

29. Governor's Report.

30. Ibid.

31. Spackman, " *Official Attitude...*"

32. Ibid.

33. Governor's Report.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. PRO: C.O.111/654 Thomson to SS, November 28, 1924.

39. Ibid

40. Chase, A History... p. 66.

41. PRO: C.O.111/657, May 4, 1925, 'Report on the Workings of the Essequibo Land Settlement Scheme During the Period 1923/24,'
42. Ibid.
43. [NAG] British Guiana Combined Court Annual Session, December 11, 1924, 'Reply of the Elective Members to the Governor's Speech.'
44. Cane shoots which were used in successive years.
45. 'Reply of the Electives...'
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. During this period, the BGLU held a series of 'unemployment' rallies (usually during the morning hours) to demonstrate to the authorities the difficult situation of the workers, see Chase, p. 66.
50. Ibid., p. 67.
51. Governor's Report.
52. Ibid.
53. The issues of inadequate accomodation and high rents within the city, constituted a major aspect of the workers protest during 1924.
54. Chase, pp. 66-67.
55. Ibid., p. 67.
56. Ibid., pp. 70-71.
57. The Commission consisted of: the Hon. W.J. Gilchrist (Attorney General), Mr. W.A. Parker (Registrar), Hons. P.N. Browne, K.C., F. Dias and Messrs. Critchlow and Grimes (representing the workers) and two representatives of the employers, see Governor's Report.
58. Chase, p. 71.
59. Riders were submitted by F. Dias and P.N. Browne, see *ibid.*
60. Private Interview with Mr. Boodram, 78 years, of Pln. Providence, during December, 1988.
61. Annual Report of the BGLU, 1924.
62. See Chase, p. 67.

63. A job of work undertaken by the employer for a pre-determined sum of money.
64. Governor's Report.
65. Chase, p. 67.
66. See Hugh Tinker, A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920 (London: Hansib Publishing Ltd., 1993.) p. 183.
67. Ibid.
68. Interview with Boodram.
69. Ibid.
70. This was largely because of the restrictive franchise and the absence of a Trade Union Legislation.
71. PRO: C.O.111/687 File No. 75080, 'BGLU Memoranda to the British Commonwealth Labour Conference,' 1930.
72. PRO: C.O.111/687 File No. 75078, " Letter from the Hon. A.V. Crane to the Colonial Secretary" [on behalf of the BGLU] October 24, 1929.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid., this Act was modelled upon the Employers Liability Act 1880 (43 and 44 vict. C. 42.)
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid., the Workingmen's Compensation Act, 1897, was in England, extended to Agricultural workers by the Workingmen's Compensation Act 1900 and the entire law is contained in the Workingmen's Compensation Act 1916.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid., this observation was made in relation to Britain's undertaking to comply with the 'Labour Convention' outlined in the 1919 Treaty of Versailles.
80. Ibid.
81. Lewis, Labour in the West Indies... p. 46.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.

84. This campaign was aided by a number of East Indians entering the legislature, see Jagan, The West on Trial... p. 64, also Table viii.

85. This development also contributed to many East Indians moving from the plantations into villages where they lived in communities with Africans.

86. See H.V.P. Bronkhurst, The Colony of British Guiana and its Labouring Population (London: 1883.)

CHAPTER VII

New Direction in Struggle: The Long-Term Implications of the Ruimveldt Workers' Incident

Decolonisation, as we know, is a historical process: that is to say that it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content...

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* p. 27.

This chapter examines the attempts made by Critchlow to widen the scope and influence of the BGLU through the creation of an alliance with the Caribbean labour movement. An appeal was also extended to the mother country in an attempt to solicit metropolitan support in the enactment of a labour legislation for the country.

The union was able to build upon the high level of co-operation and ethnic solidarity exhibited by the workers during the Incident, in its national appeal for working people's unity and local representation in the legislature. In this process the initiative was taken by the BGEIA and other community based organisations to present working people's demands before the authorities. The activities of these groups were reinforced by the success of the Popular Party at the 1926 election.

The final section examines the way the suspension of the constitution in 1928 disrupted the momentum and destroyed the trajectory of Guianese political development. The leaders of the people attempted to overcome this setback through the widening of the political agenda of the labour movement.

The New Image of the BGLU

During the period 1925-1930, the BGLU was able to transform its image and influence in Guiana and the Caribbean. Through the foresight of Critchlow, the union pioneered the Guiana and West Indian and International Labour Conference which was held in Guiana from the 12th to 14th January 1926. This move was in keeping with the union's objective of extending representation to a wider section of the Guianese working people and also projecting its image overseas in an attempt to bring the Guianese labour situation to the attention of the international labour organisations.

This conference was attended by F.O.Roberts M.P. on behalf of the British Labour Party, A.A.Cipriani and other senior labour leaders of the West Indies. [1] In a show of solidarity with the union, Messrs A.K. Amin and W.D. Dinally of the BGEIA, attended on behalf of that organisation and the East Indian community. Mr. Amin who was the current Vice President of the BGEIA shared the chairmanship of the three days session with the Rt. Hon. F.O.Roberts and Capt. the Hon. A.A.Cipriani of Trinidad. [2] Among the messages of solidarity were greetings from the Indian Congress in which the Labour Union was specially asked to convey a message to the Indians in British Guiana that " they must organise and organise in alliance with the workers of other nationalities to build a Socialist State." [3] This message was in keeping with the new outlook of the Indian government in relation to Indian nationals in Guiana. [4]

The rapid increase in the ranks of the working people and the demands made by workers from almost every profession and

trade for representation, resulted in a more complex labour scene than was the case in the early 1920s. In addition the strong political demands which were presented by the working people, made it clear to the executive of the BGLU that the union did not have the required structure and resources-mainly financial-and constitutional authority.

Although registered, the extent to which the union was able to resort to industrial action, such as picketing, was severely restricted because Guiana did not possess a body of labour laws which specified the field of activities of the union. In the absence of such legislation, it was largely up to the Governor and employers to determine the extent of the union's activities on behalf of the workers. In addition, during the workers' Incident, the employers did not recognise the BGLU's authority to provide representation for workers who were not registered with the organisation.

Many workers from the the city and the country districts were prevented from entering the bargaining Chamber when Critchlow met with the employers, because they were not unionised. The need was felt for unions to be legalised and be allowed to provide representation for a wider section of the community-which included part-time and self-employed workers. This was difficult in Guiana because of planter resistance to such developments. [5] It was therefore necessary for the labour leaders to appeal to the mother country to support them in the implementation of trade union legislation. The section below examines the British approach to the development of trade unionism in Guiana and countries of the Caribbean.

British Policy on the Development of Trade Unionism

Before the late 1920s, the British government had not developed a comprehensive policy on trade unionism in the colonies. [6] This was due to several factors. Firstly, in the early twentieth century, Britain did not regard her colonial Empire as a homogeneous unit. Peculiar local conditions such as size, economic importance and the composition and political awareness of the population, were significant factors in the drafting of guidelines to regulate specific activities within different parts of the Empire. In the Dominions for example, the tendency was for the local government to be given much autonomy in formulating rules to govern internal affairs. [7]

In Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, the activities of the 'natives' had to be closely monitored to ensure a high level of responsibility. This paternalistic approach, the authorities reasoned, was necessary in territories where

there was few skilled workers and the supply of unskilled labour was ample; illiteracy, ethnic divisions and poverty made for fragmentation, poor organisation and weakness; leadership was frequently supplied from outside the ranks of the workers themselves...[8]

Although evidence from the Caribbean and the non-white colonies revealed the inaccurate nature of these assumptions, notions of racial superiority and inferiority dominated British Colonial relationship for much of the period under study and beyond. [9]

A major concern of the British authorities was the active political agenda of colonial trade unionism. Although many unions were ineffective in resolving industrial disputes, they were still impressively coherent armies in the context of

underdeveloped political systems and were quickly seen as such by perceptive political leaders. [10]

More significantly, union members were naturally reaching out towards radical political activities. This move was supported by the fact that in the colonies trade unions emerged from a tradition of organisation at the 'grass roots' and community level. Working people being organised in this way, during a period of national political campaign, could not avoid being deeply affected.

From such a background and in the light of organised working people's resistance which (in the context of Guiana and the Caribbean) intensified during the 1920s and 30s, the Colonial Office was advised to pay closer attention to labour development in the region. The decision was made to pursue a policy of controlled development and installed overseas " a rather 'purified' good behaviour British unionism. " [11]

Drummond Shiels, Sidney Webb's Under-Secretary of State at the Colonial Office was instrumental in the drafting of the **PASSFIELD CIRCULAR** in 1930. [12] This circular urged colonial governments to legalise local trade union movements, most of which at that point remained outside of the law. Shiels' influence was also considerable in the establishment of the **COLONIAL LABOUR COMMITTEE** to aid in the implementation of legislation for colonial labour. [13]

The Passfield Circular set the pattern for future trends in colonial trade union movements in relation to metropolitan intervention. It encouraged colonial governments to bring trade unions inside the law, giving them " supervision and guidance"

and avoiding their diversion to " improper and mischievous " ends. [14] The circular marked the first official statement of what became the standard Colonial Office position: that trade unions could be steered into what was perceived as acceptable forms of conflict in exchange for recognition of their legitimacy. [15]

It was however, the British TUC which exercised the widest influence among Caribbean labour leaders. From around 1929, the influence of this organisation began to be felt in the region. TUC officials worked closely with the British government, first in the area of colonial labour policy, and then in the sphere of foreign labour policy. In the first instance, the TUC became part of the formal institutional structure for the Colonial and Foreign Offices, which allowed it both to influence and to effect British foreign and colonial labour policy goals. [16]

In addition, the TUC established its own foreign policy which reflected its views on colonial trade union development. This policy was " not just a position supportive or opposed to governmental policy but an independent engagement with foreign and colonial labour movements. " [17] However, whatever posture was adopted by the TUC, care was taken to ensure that it was in keeping with British policy.

This personal involvement of members of the TUC in colonial labour issues, resulted in a number of meaningful and lasting relationships with leading West Indian leaders. Through the personal involvement of men such as Cripps, Oliver, Creech-Jones and Sir. Walter (later Lord) Citrine, Guianese labour leaders such as Critchlow and A.A. Thorne were able to get a series of

important labour issues being addressed by the British government. [18]

Thorne the founder of the BGWL, emerged as an important spokesperson for Guianese labour and the officially recognised Liaison Officer in all transactions between the TUC and the Guianese, and in some instances, Caribbean labour leaders. In this capacity, he was able to solicit the assistance of many organisations and individuals, in Britain, sympathetic towards the struggle of the Guianese working people. [19] Thorne's contribution proved significant to labour development during the late 1930s.

Given this background to labour legislation, the workers in Guiana were in constant struggle against planter exploitation. In this context, the Ruimveldt Incident was significant because of the way it brought together a vast section of the working people united in struggle and organised at the community level to present labour issues at a time when the influence of the union was severely restricted.

The popularity of this incident was also reflected in the way the leaders were able to appeal to the people through community based organisations such as the church and village groups. In a society where ethnic division was promoted in a bid to foil working people's solidarity, the coming together of different fractions of the working people was particularly disturbing to the employers.

At the community level, social and political organisations such as the 'Young Guianese Party,' Farmers Associations' in different areas of the country, 'Young People Improvement

Societies' and the 'Workingmen's and Workingwomen's Associations' were adequately represented by members of the African and East Indian communities. These organisations which played an important role in the organisational arrangement of the Ruimveldt Incident, emerged to assist in the continuation of the struggle. [20]

It became clear to the authorities that initiative had passed from the middle class—a group which they were accustomed to deal with—to the labour leaders and other progressive working people's organisations. Although many of these organisations enjoyed substantial middle class support, their agenda—which included demands for access to crown lands and the development of a successful peasantry, the opening up of the interior and the development of economies outside of sugar and the broadening of the franchise—was much wider than that of their predecessors, and it was their views the Electives presented to the legislature.

A deeper consciousness of the working people emerged largely through the nature of the society during the 1920s. A significant increase in the amount of workers living in villages and free of contractual obligations to the plantation, increasing unemployment, arbitrary dismissals and pay reduction without consultation, rising cost of living and exploitation by unscrupulous landlords were factors which aided in the development of this consciousness. Workers of every category and ethnic orientation were affected and they sought ways of liberating themselves.

The workers' Incident, in many ways gave new life to the nationalistic zeal which characterised the political struggle in Guiana during the 1920s. Gone was the old order when the

capitalists and the middle class determined the needs of the working people and the nature of their representation.

The leaders of the main working people's organisations—the BGLU and the BGEIA—were familiar with the activities of each in mobilising and championing workers' cause. Critchlow and Kawall were aware of the benefits to be derived from working together. This was evident in the workers' strategy of having the East Bank demonstration complement the strike and protest in Georgetown. This posture was made clear to the Governor and other colonial officials. [21] After the workers' Incident this form of co-operation continued in the form of joint representation in delegation at working people's forum, [22] and in many aspects of village life.

In response to the people's demands and recognising that a solution to working people's problems was beyond the limits of industrial relations, the BGLU made the decision to present itself as part of a popular movement which confronted the system. The executive of the organisation capitalised upon the momentum and the structures which were created by the Ruimveldt Incident in an effort to pursue a wider national agenda.

The BGLU's militancy as well as Critchlow's own analysis of the conditions contributed much to the increasing political consciousness of the Guianese working people. Critchlow and his colleagues clearly recognised the petite bourgeoisie as the enemy of the working people. [23] They also criticised the role of the British Governor and big business in oppressing the masses. They stressed the class nature of the conflict between workers and employers, and preached against a racial interpretation of the

struggle. The BGLU also contributed to the political culture by continuing and deepening the tradition of street corner meetings.

[24]

This appeal was supported by the BGEIA, the church and the national press. For example in 1925, the BGEIA hosted Mr. Kunwar Maraj Singh, an Indian Commissioner, when he visited the country as an official of the Indian government investigating the state of development and the general wellbeing of East Indians in Guiana. This was in response to the request of the Guiana government to renew the importation of Indian labourers. [25]

In an address to members of the East Indian community, he stressed the need for East Indians in Guiana to be proud of their Indian heritage but they must ensure that they improve the quality of life in Guiana through helping each other and ensuring that all school-aged children (male and female) be exposed to a system of education. He noted: " There can be nothing more graceful than an educated Indian lady..." [26] On the question of the prosperity of the country he stressed the need for the Indian and " other communities in this country to work in co-operation with each other." [27]

In his report, Singh expressed great satisfaction with the marked increase in the number of Indian voters, both for the Legislature and Town Councils. He praised the work of the BGEIA in this regard and noted: " At present one Indian Mr. J.A. Luckhoo, holds a seat in the Combined Court, but at the next elections in 1926 there is every possibility of an increase in the number provided Indians combined as well as organise for the purpose." [28]

Issues relating to representation for the masses dominated public opinion during the 1920s. Working people, together with other members of the community were united in the belief that much of the problem faced by the masses could be effectively addressed if the majority within the society had a greater say in the development priorities of the country.

The popular press made its contribution to the debate for constitutional reform by taking every opportunity to publish articles on the subject. In an article published in the Tribune, *Naiva Tasya*, examined some of the issues relating to the granting of self-government to Guiana. [29] The claim that the masses were not enlightened and therefore unable to exercise the franchise wisely, was seen as a situation created by the authorities for failing to make adequate education provision for the working people. [30]

The point was made that there was the pressing need for the people of the country to have a greater say in deciding policies in important issues such as education. Stressing the importance of devolution, the writer noted: " It is in the nature of things to progress. No one can completely arrest the onward march to better things and to self-government, but the ultimate attainment may be indefinitely delayed unless the people take the reins in their own hands. " [31]

An illustration of the importance of the press during the 1920s was made when a correspondent stated that " the masses looked largely to the press for political guidance. " [32] This importance was reflected in the capacity of the media to give publicity, favourable or unfavourable, to whatever the Electives

did, and few politicians could have afforded to ignore it, particularly during an election campaign.

Such a campaign took place in Guiana during 1926. The election of that year is important in this analysis for a number of reasons. First, the BGLU and the BGEIA, played a leading role in identifying candidates and publicly declaring their support for specific politicians who were seeking election to the legislature. Secondly, many of the issues which constituted workers demands during and after the Ruimveldt Incident, were given priority in the manifesto of the 'Popular Party.' [33] In addition, the Guianese electorate was influenced by the candidates' policy and public appeal which was centred around issues of national importance rather than narrow ethnic considerations. This is significant in support of the claim that after the Ruimveldt Incident working people concentrated on resolving issues which were relevant to the entire community and were willing to support leaders who offered the best prospects of resolving such issues.

The general election of 1926 was described as the most keenly contested in the colony at a time when political organisation reached its highest level of sophistication. [34] The 'Popular Party' emerged to lead the opposition to the government. The Daily Argosy noted that it was " the first organised party " to emerge in the colony. [35] This 'Party' was founded by Nelson Cannon-Elective Member and proprietor of the Daily Chronicle and A.R.F. Webber-Elective Member and Editor of the Daily Chronicle. The common interest in the newspaper brought the two politicians together. [36]

The Popular Party brought together-within a 'Party'-several politicians who shared a common aspiration to oppose the government section of the legislature and promote working people's issues. This was an important development in Guiana where the Elective Members were widely divided in terms of policy and did not, as a rule, act in concert in relation to issues which were brought before the legislature.

The Party supported the construction of a railway to the interior of the colony as a means of achieving economic development and relieving unemployment. According to E.F. Fredricks (executive member of the Negro Progress Convention), [37] unemployment was "so universal in the city of Georgetown as to be tantamount to a disgrace to the government's existence." [38]

Among the other policy statements were a demand for manhood suffrage and votes for women, securing salary increase for the lower level of the Civil Service and other government servants, the protection of the "masses of the people," the right to self-government in villages, the protection and fostering of trade unions and a commitment to change the Constitutional Ordinance to accomodate these reforms. [39]

The East Indian Congress [40] publicly stated that it was supporting the election of both R.E. Brassington and P.N. Browne. [41] The BGLU also came out in support of Browne. [42] These individuals were known for their opposition to the government and were seen as champions of the working people's cause. Brassington gained prominence in the legislature as "doughty champion of the people's cause" and "Tribune of the people." [43]

Most of the members of the Popular Party made the kind of appeal which was likely to find favour with the section of the population they claimed to represent, voters and non-voters alike. For example Webber who can be regarded as being among the foremost political thinkers of the period, [44] was very popular among the people.

Among the fourteen Electives who were returned at the election, the following were known members of the Popular Party or 'Cannonites' [45] group: J.P. Santos, J. DaSilva, P.A. Fernandes, J. Gonsalves and S.M. DeFreitas (Portuguese), A.E. Seeram (East Indian), E.F. Fredericks (African) N. Cannon and J. Dodds (whites), E.G. Woolford and A.R.F. Webber (coloured). [46]

It is instructive to note that although Africans comprised the majority of the electorate, followed by East Indians, these groups were each represented by only one among the Cannonites (Fredericks and Seeram). Further, of the total number of fourteen Electives, there were only three Africans (Fredericks, J.S. McArthur and J. Eleazer). Three of the fourteen Electives were Europeans, (in Guiana during the 1920s Portuguese were not classified as Europeans) this meant that a proportion of 22% of the Electives were Europeans who continued to be over represented in relation to their census strength. [47] In 1921 Europeans were less than 2% of the entire population. [48] In terms of ethnic composition, the Elective section of the legislature was dominated by the coloureds and Portuguese.

What was clearly demonstrated was the fact that the electorate was not partial to African candidates-a testimony to the level of sophistication attained by the working people.

Commenting on this feature of the election, Shahabuddeen, made the important observation that the Europeans might have secured greater representation if there was not " a certain reluctance on their part to seek election. " [49]

During the period the working people made it clear through popular demonstration and demands, that they were united in pursuing certain issues which affected them as a group or '*class.*' They were therefore willing to support any individual or group prepared to represent their interests within the legislature. This position informed the politicians that to secure election they were obliged to put forward and later implement policies closer to those of their '*humbler political opponents*' than those of the plantocracy. [50] Planters influence in the legislature was therefore determined by the interests of the predominantly African electorate. Although it was possible for them to be elected, their particular interests had lost effective representation in the legislature. [51]

The Popular Party had a special appeal for the electorate because of the way the members conducted the election campaign. There was a deliberate effort to go out into the villages and around the city conducting public meetings and small group discussion. [52] The people were satisfied that they were a part of the process and were consulted in the drafting of policies designed to improve their lives.

In addition, the electorate was attracted by the fact that the '*Cannonites*' were attempting to create unanimity among the Elective representatives for the common good of the country. When confronted with such consensus of opinion, and the realisation

that the Electives demands reflected the determined will of the people, the government was compelled to pay attention to such demands. On the other hand, so long as the government had seen that the Electives were " not only playing at chess with one another, but were actually in open warfare...government would simply sit and smilingly look on. " [53]

The effectiveness of the Popular Party should be seen in the Party's recognition of the need to promote working people's issues and also its role in increasing workers' awareness of the central role of the government and the Colonial Office [54] in the problems they experienced. It should be noted that the nature of the constitution made it difficult for the Party to satisfy the demands of any section of the population. However, it was because of their consciousness of this hurdle that they were struggling to find a way out of the situation in which the Electives were always in an impotent position. [55] The essence of their campaign was that a majority was likely to place them in a position of strength and more effective in the legislature. In the light of the observations above, the election of a African and coloured majority to the legislature marked an important development in working people's struggle to have their issues recognised and addressed by the authorities.

New Direction in Struggle

In response to this victory, the plantocracy attempted, at the colonial level, to mould governmental policy in their image through an increase in the nominated membership of the Executive Council. [56] At the metropolitan level, they exploited the special means at their disposal for influencing and even putting

pressure on the imperial government to secure attention to their views and wishes. [57] Their campaign was aided by the fact that in the 1920s, the views of the plantocracy coincided with those of the British government and the Colonial Office in general, that 'native' peoples were unfit to govern themselves. [58]

The British government responded to the planters' lobby by suspending the country's constitution in 1928. The justification given by the authorities for this move was that the British government needed to be placed in effective Legislative and Executive control of the colony if they were to offer any substantial financial assistance for economic development.

Significantly, the changes created by the new constitution added to the working people's inability to resort to constitutional means in an attempt to find a solution to their problems. Working people were denied much of the gains which they made before 1926. [59]

The theory that the discretionary powers of the crown's officials were to be used on behalf of the unrepresented classes was belied by the depressing economic and political condition of the working people. The conditions were so deplorable that one observer was moved to say that " crown colony government in the West Indies makes the worse of both worlds." [60] The British government was saddled with the responsibility for good government and economic prosperity of the colony and the people of the region were denied the opportunity of exploring avenues outside of Britain to aid in their economic development. [61]

This constitutional setback hampered the natural development of the political process in Guiana. The proto-political

organisations of the lower middle class and the working people, such as the 'People's Association,' which were established during the early decades of the century, and the Popular Party, which defeated the planting interests in 1926, failed to develop into mass based political parties in spite of their popularity and promising structure.

The Electives lost much of their influence in the legislature after 1928 and the impact of the Popular Party was nullified. Working people were in the process of struggle and turned to the community organisations which were active in the mobilisation of the masses, for political leadership.

The Impact of Community Based Organisations in the Political Movement

The church which was always at the centre of working people's social organisation, joined the BGLU and the BGEIA in championing working people's issues. Deprived of a forum in the legislature, the workers discussed national issues at public gatherings and petitioned the Governor at every available opportunity. The church aided in this process by mobilising workers during demonstrations and enlightening the congregation about issues of the day. Active in Guiana during the period was the Reverend Claude Smith, 'Chaplain General of the Church Army of America.' [62] Reverend Smith established the " Church Army Camp" at Lot 195 Camp Street Georgetown. [63]

The importance of the church during this period was in the way it was able to bring the labour leaders and representatives of community organisations together to continue the struggle at the extra-parliamentary level. Under the leadership of the

church, delegations from the people paid regular visits to the Governor at Government House [64] or Guiana Public Buildings, [65] to make direct submissions on behalf of different sections of the community.

For example in December 1929, the members of the Church Army of America submitted an open letter: "*Arise! cry out for the children that hunger and are naked PROCLAIM...*" [66] to the Governor. This letter which highlighted homelessness, lack of representation, unemployment and the general deplorable state of the working people in Guiana, was presented on behalf of the "Inhabitants, Members of various Churches, Lodges, Organisations and Societies representing the Masses Inhabitants and Peoples of British Guiana..." [67]

Further, the letter pointed out that the working people of Guiana besides being unable to obtain work were "compelled to meet heavy taxation in many cases levied against them in spite of universal protest." [68] These and other problems which the people faced were due in part to the "Constitution having been altered and changed without their consent in spite of their protests through Representatives engaged to represent their disapproval before the King and Parliament." [69]

Smith held a series of public meetings in different sections of the city. He defied the police [70] and organised and led protest marches around Georgetown and directly to Government House for an audience with the Governor. [71] John Lucie Griffith of the BGLU accompanied him on these demonstrations.

Smith's message which also embraced tax relief for the working people and improved transportation network along the East

Coast and to the hinterland communities, was very appealing to the working people who were constantly moving into different areas of the country in search of employment opportunities. Such was his popularity that the Governor was compelled to meet with him along with other leaders of the people on February 2, 1930.

Smith's delegation was representative of the leading community based organisations and reflected the ethnic diversity of the working people. The following leaders were present: Mr. E. B. Barker, Chaplain and Workingmen's Deputy; Mr. John Richard Moore, People's Deputy; Mr. William Thomas Phillips, People's Deputy; Mr. Lucie Griffith (veteran member of the BGLU) [72] and Pundit [73] Gharbharan Doobay (of the East Indian community).

Moore and Griffith brought to the Governor's attention a number of practical suggestions for the creation of jobs in Georgetown. In addition they identified roads around the city which were in need of maintenance and also government buildings which required repairs through neglect by the City Council. The delegation made the point that an effective programme of maintenance of the city's infrastructure had the potential of creating jobs for the unemployed. Griffith concluded that, " rather than give the people relief in the form of ration, it will be more desirable to give them work. " [74]

The strategy of meeting with the Governor which was pursued by the church brought to the attention of the government working people's issues which, under a democratic system, would have been channeled through the Electives. The working people's petitions to the Governor was an expression of their determination to

ensure that their concerns reached the highest authority in the land at a time when they were denied effective representation in the legislature.

Trade Union Support in the Extra-Parliamentary Process

This limitation was reflected in almost every aspect of life in the country. Increasingly, the need was felt for national representation through an appeal to a wider section of the community. These and other issues were given a wider audience by the BGLU. In its memoranda presented at the British Commonwealth Labour Conference in 1930, the union stressed that the country suffered a loss of capital from the large investors in the sugar industry. Because the capitalist class effectively dominated the local legislature, this class was able to resist the payment of income tax until 1929. [75] In addition, the fact that most of the large businesses in the country were registered in England, all their income tax was paid there. [76]

The union insisted that the deplorable industrial and economic conditions in Guiana was due to the fact " that the proletariat have never had a voice in the direction of its affairs." [77] A call was also made for adult suffrage and responsible government. [78]

The union was strong in its condemnation of the absence of a Workingmen's Compensation Act and a court to defend workers' rights. The point was made that: " British Guiana may be said to be among the most neglected parts of the Commonwealth with respect to its Industrial and Social Legislation." [79] Consequently, when workers are injured on the job, they were forced to rely upon the charity of the employer, become

involved in expensive litigation or abandoned their claim all together. [80]

Of equal significance to a Workingmen's Compensation Ordinance, was a law enforcing a eight hour day and minimum wage. This was necessary to protect vulnerable workers, for example some categories of estate workers and female city workers in the domestic and other sectors. [81]

Although the union was able to negotiate an eight hour day for the dock workers, [82] this was largely an arrangement between the employers and employees. The workers were seeking security in a binding legislation. According to the union, without such a legislation much of the workers' gains " may be swept away at any moment if in the present industrial depression capital finds it possible to make an inroad upon the privileges of labour. " [83] These were some of the issues which the working people placed before the authorities. Because workers of every category and racial orientation were affected, it was necessary for them to adopt a united approach in the struggle.

Thorne and the British Guiana Workers League (BGWL) emerged to lend support to this movement through an appeal to the metropolis for support for industrial legislation and also questions relating to the general development of the country. Thorne decision to establish the BGWL was influenced by his connections with the British Labour Party and the TUC.

The BGWL, established in 1930, gained much prominence in the country through the appointment, in that year, of the first Labour Governor-Denham-who was given the responsibility to render such collaboration as would assist in making a Labour

Administration in the colony a great improvement on other administrations.

In addition, Thorne pursued a policy of collaboration with the TUC because of the benefits which he knew could be realised from such connections. He was aware of the new approach (as a result of the Passfield Circular) of the Colonial Office towards colonial labour development—a development reinforced by the appointment of a Labour Administration in Britain. What was even more significant for him, was the fact that in this new outlook, the views of the TUC was solicited and in many cases adapted.

He used this channel to bring to the attention of the international community, the state of development in the country. In a letter to Citrine for example, he informed him of the unsatisfactory performance of the acting Governor. [84] Because of his weakness, the Governor was unable to exercise effective control over the activities of the merchants who were given the opportunity to add to the price of old stock, while the colonial authorities prevented the stevedores and estate labourers from getting the smallest increase on their meagre wages. [85] In addition, the Governor even attempted to cancel the 10% war bonus which was granted to all employees of the Georgetown City Council. [86]

Low wages, poverty, unemployment and wholesale wastage of juvenile life were common features in the colony. Thorne stressed that strikes for higher wages should not be considered the remedy for the appalling conditions in the country. A more effective and long term remedy was seen in the implementation of a definite developmental plan. Because of the agricultural potential of the

country, the considered aim of the working people should be to develop its agricultural capabilities. In order to support the agricultural development, the administration of the colony must undergo radical changes. " There must be no lessening of the pressure on the administration until it [the colony] is served by (i) an Agricultural Department worthy of the name and (ii) by a Public Works Department equipped with staff, capable of preparing areas of coastlands for successful preservation by peasant-farmer-proprietors." [87] These initiatives were to be supported by an efficient Agricultural Bank.

In the absence of a blanket organisation [Local-Guianese TUC-] which provided representation for all the unions, many labour leaders looked to Thorne and the British Guiana Workers' League for leadership and support. Thorne's importance as a labour leader was reinforced by the respect and support he received from labour representatives throughout the country.

In his capacity, as recognised representative of labour-in transactions with the TUC-Thorne informed Sir Walter " That the recognition of trade unions continues to be tardy in this Colony." [88] This obstacle was of particular significance at that time when several categories of workers recognised the value of bonding into strong workers' unions for their mutual benefit. The fact that many trade union organisations emerged in a country where there was no specific ruling on the legal status of such organisations, prompted employers to refuse to recognise the majority of these unions as the official bargaining agencies of workers. The sugar estates-represented by the British Guiana Sugar Producers Association,-BGSPA, employers of, by far, the

largest group of workers in the country, only recognised the BGLU and the BGWL [89] The planters even took steps to establish their own system of wages and labour control. The sugar Producers' Association set up a Labour Welfare Department to deal with all matters in connection with labour on several estates, irrespective of ownership. [90] This 'Department' promoted the interests of the sugar proprietors.

Reacting to these developments, the sugar workers responded with stiff opposition. [91] It was obvious to all that the attitude of the employers on the sugar estates, was far from acceptable to the workers. It was to combat these moves that the Manpower Citizens Association (MPCA) emerged as the official bargaining agent for field workers on the sugar estates. It should be noted however, that almost every category of workers on the estate benefited from the representation the union provided.

The MPCA emerged to launch an effective struggle against the estate proprietors for higher wages and improved working conditions for cane cutters. However, the organisation's impact extended beyond labour issues and should be evaluated in its role of filling a vacuum for political leadership on a national scale.

The need for such leadership was felt as early as 1928 with the suspension of the constitution. The issues relating to trade union legislation and economic development (raised by the BGLU and Thorne of the BGWL) could not have been addressed without national consensus and effective representation within the legislature. The MPCA emerged to launch a direct political challenge to the colonial government by seeking to obtain the

support of a wide section of the Guianese masses.

The introduction of a Crown Colony system of government in 1928, resulted in the diminution of the executive powers of the Electives in the legislature. This constitutional setback also had negative consequences for the extra-parliamentary actions which were evident at the beginning of the century and gained momentum after the Workers Incident in 1924.

Public meetings, petitions to the Governor, workers' demonstrations organised by the BGLU, the BGEIA and individuals such as the Reverend Smith, were based on the belief that such activities would influence the pace and scope of changes introduced through the legislature, this did not happen. Further, the activities of most of these organisations were confined to the city and a few areas of the country districts. Between 1924 and the formation of the MPCA, no national political organisation emerged and there was no effective challenge to the system launched from within the legislature.

The Question of 'Race' in the Political Movement

The MPCA was registered on November 5, 1937, and set about organising sugar estate workers (mainly East Indian field workers). [92] The union emerged during a period when the labour climate on many of the estates was characterised by frequent disputes and disturbances. [93] The first part of this section examines the union's impact upon labour relations on the estate. The second part evaluates its political impact.

The support for the MPCA was formidable. Between 1938 and 1943, its membership rose to over 20,000. [94] The numerical superiority of this organisation could be found in the fact that

in addition to the large amount of workers employed in the sugar industry, the union employed a policy of consistently lowering the rate of subscription for membership. This policy was a major source of attraction for the low income workers. In addition, it was the first time that the estate workers had their issues represented by a union which was recognised by the employers to bargain on their behalf.

From its inception, the MPCA initiated a series of meetings with the executive of the BGSPA. The agenda at these meetings was usually dominated by issues relating to wages and working condition of field workers. [95]

Stressing the impact of the Second European War on prices and cost of living for workers, the union, on September 15, 1939, submitted a claim to the planters for a 25% increase in wages for all workers on the estates. The response of the BGSPA was to state that: " No further increases can be given until the estates know what their position will be now that the price of colonial sugar had been controlled by the UK government both in Canada and the UK, and in the view of the continuing rise in the cost of estate supplies..." [96]

The union's executive was not convinced that the sugar proprietors were giving an accurate picture of the economic state of the plantations. To prove this point, they submitted the following tables showing receipts and expenditure of the sugar industry:

TABLE XI

Figures for 1938:

Receipts.

Exported Sugar.....	\$7,573,905
" Rum.....	474,453
" Molasses.....	302,091
" Molascuit.....	8,106
Rents: Estimated Local Sale of:	
Sugar (Remainder of Production).....	500,000
Local Value of Rum.....	140,000
Total.....	\$9,073,555

TABLE XII

Expenditure:

Salaries and Wages.....	\$4,000,000
Supplies and Miscellaneous.....	3,024,518
Total.....	7,024,518
Total Receipt.....	\$9,073,555
Total Expenditure.....	7,024,518
Surplus.....	\$2,049,037
Depreciation on Capital \$26,000,000* 4%-1,040,000	
Total Balance.....	\$1,009,037

Source: TUC File: MSS 292/972 .8/1, Submitted to the BGSPA by the MPCA.

The receipt of sugar is based on the sale price of the commodity of \$41.2 per ton. In 1939, the figures revealed an increase of receipts over expenditure. Given this trend, it was estimated that the trade balance for 1940 at \$2,234,650. These figures indicate that a trade balance of \$2,234,650 was possible at the British government price. Granting an increase of 25% on salaries and wages worked out at \$1,000,000. Leaving the sum of \$1,234,650 as profits. [97] Irrespective of the degree of

accuracy of these figures, it is clear that it was possible for sugar workers to get wage increase if the employers were willing to accept a reduced profit margin. Through their actions the employers demonstrated that they were unwilling to take that course.

This position was strongly supported by several of the registered unions in the country. At a meeting of the Combined Trades Unions' Association and Friendly Societies of British Guiana, held at the Parade Ground on Sunday 12th Nov. 1939, the following resolution was passed and the decision taken to place it before the Governor for his consideration:

(i) And whereas these prices are about 71% above the prices under normal conditions, and of the same period last year.

(ii) And whereas the employers have not given any increase in wage commensurate with the increased prices and cost of living, and some of them have not increased the wages of their workers at all.

(iii) And whereas the merchants have increased the prices on food and clothing which were stock previous to the declaration of war, and are making double profits on their old stock, and by control of the prices of new stock, there can be no loss to the merchants and employers. [98]

In support of the memorandum Critchlow, on behalf of the BGLU, submitted the following list to the merchants. This list makes a comparison of the prices of essential food items for the years 1938 and 1939:

TABLE XIII

	1938	1939
Cooling Butter.....	36 cents per lb	48 cents per lb
Cocoa Powder.....	24 " " "	40 " " "
Sago.....	5 " " pt.	14 " " pt.
Barley.....	4 " " "	11 " " "
Coffee.....	6 " " lb	11 " " lb
Fresh Milk.....	4 " " pt	5 " " pt
Milkmaid Milk.....	10 " " "	12 " " "
D.C. Sugar.....	7 " for 2 lbs	8 " for 2 lbs
Flour.....	3 " per "	5 " per "
Rice.....	2 " " pt	3 " " pt
Split Peas.....	4 " " "	12 " " "
Black Eye Peas.....	5 " " "	12 " " "
Sweet Potatoes.....	3 " " lb	4 " " lb
English Potatoes...	5 " for 2 lbs	8 " for 2 lbs
Salt Fish.....	6 " per lb	11 " per lb
Mackerel.....	6 " " "	8 " " "
Pigtail.....	12 " " "	15 " " "
Fresh Beef.....	8 and 10 cts per lb	12 and 14 cts per lb
Salt.....	3 for 2 lbs	2 cts per lb

Source: TUC File: MSS 292/972 .8/1, Letter from Critchlow of the BGLU to the Merchants, Requesting an increase in wages on Behalf of Stevedores and Dock Labourers November 8, 1939.

This period saw a continuation of the policy of stagnation in the development of the industries outside the realm of sugar. With the advent of war in 1939, stronger restrictive measures were placed on foreign investors wishing to do business in the country. Financial support from Britain was very limited in certain instances and not forthcoming in others. The major excuse being the economic recession brought on by the war. To relieve the metropolis from her colonial financial responsibilities, the Colonial Office strongly recommended additional taxation in various forms to be levied upon the working people.

The Political Influence of the MPCA

Against this background, the majority of the population found themselves powerless to effectively address this dilemma.

The leaders of the union saw the opportunity to capitalise upon the large support they enjoyed from the predominantly East Indian sugar workers, to create a solid base among the people. The union's executive (mainly East Indians) [99] used their influence in the East Indian community in their pursuit of special bargaining for its members.

Ayube Edun, founder and president and a prominent businessman and publisher, used his influence among wealthy East Indian businessmen and proprietors to gain financial and other forms of support for the union. He campaigned in Rose Hall [100] and other East Indian communities to recruit members and supporters.

Although workers' welfare was central to the union's activities, Edun was able to use the forum to bring to the large membership many political issues of the period. His reputation as a 'spokesperson' for the East Indian community was enhanced through his forceful and pungent articles published in the Guiana Review and later, in the Labour Advocate of which he was the editor and proprietor. The message which Edun sent through the MPCA was attractive to the workers. The newspaper organ enabled this message to reach working people in several regions of the country. The newspaper campaigned for constitutional reform, an eight-hour day, minimum wage and reform of the trade union and a Workingmen's Compensation Law, the former to allow peaceful picketing, and the latter to include agricultural workers. [101]

Although the majority of the executive members were East Indians, and its main objective was to organise estate workers- who were mainly East Indians- the union strongly denied the claim

that it was racist and excluded Africans. While the organisation's stated objective was to champion the cause of a particular section of the East Indian community, it co-operated with other sections of the working people on issues of national importance. This kind of relationship among the ethnic sections of the Guianese working people was not unusual during the period.

The dissertation shows the throughout the 1920s and 30s, the BGEIA promoted the social and cultural welfare of members of the East Indian community. Being deprived of the avenue to have their grievances presented through the national political machinery, it was natural for members of this community to rely upon this organisation which supported them over the years.

In addition, the analysis revealed that since 1924, the BGEIA, mindful of the developments taking place within the East Indian community and the country in general, took steps to widen the scope and nature of representation it offered to members. This posture of the organisation included providing guidance and representation in economic and political matters. For example in keeping with its policy (pursued in the 1920s), of providing representation at the national level, in March 1939, the BGEIA gave evidence before the Royal West Indian Commission on behalf of the East Indian members of the community. [102] The significance of this is in the observation that the organisation of working people along ethnic lines did not prevent them from recognising the significant national issues and co-operating with other groups for the attainment of common goals.

What is important, however, is that the workers, more than other groups in the society, were affected by the condition of

dependence. In this way every aspect of their lives was influenced by an external authority. Working people therefore saw national liberation as inseparable from social advancement. In the pursuit of this objective, there was complete consensus among the various sections of the community.

In Guiana, there was no consistent pattern in union-nationalist movement. Sometimes workers co-operation across ethnic boundaries was recognisable in the nature of their approach to labour issues. At other times, the nature of collaboration was less obvious. In spite of this posture, it has been demonstrated that during the 1920s and 30s, working people co-operated on important issues such as the opening up of the interior, labour legislation, the creation of employment opportunities and the widening of the franchise to include women and a greater section of the Guianese community. The nationalist approach to labour and other issues gave a great degree of cohesion to the labour movement.

Over the years, working people have demonstrated their awareness of measures adopted to foil their struggle. A manifestation of this awareness is in the fact that each of the major racial sections took steps to develop and expand community organisations to champion issues specific to their group, and when necessary, that of the entire country. Whenever the national leadership is seen to be weak or proved ineffective through metropolitan intervention, the working people looked to these organisations for leadership and guidance.

The complex ethnic composition of the society and the nature of the labour regimes resulted in a situation in which workers'

unity proved to be easily disrupted. Moments of working people's co-operation as witnessed during the Ruimveldt Incident, had to be built upon and continually reinforced through collective action and strong leadership. The leaders have the responsibility of taking the initiative to foster a national movement. The constitutional changes which were initiated in 1928 played an important role in weakening the national movement in Guiana.

In the process of creating a national movement, the racial peculiarity and working people's solidarity are significant factors to be considered, but they are not enough in themselves to determine the effectiveness of the struggle. The theoretical perspective adopted in this dissertation demonstrates that these factors must be considered objectively within the context of a dynamic historical process. Working people's struggle is significant in influencing this process, therefore the workers are in a position to determine the present and future patterns of their own development through constant struggle. This process was recognised-and contributed to- by every section of the Guianese masses.

During the 1920s and 30s, working people demonstrated a high level of consciousness, of the nature of their oppression, and creativity in their struggle against imperialism. In this context workers' unity was not always expressed in strikes, demonstrations and other overt acts of protest. In addition, the absence of these acts of resistance or open demonstration of co-operation among the different groups in the society was not always an indication of stagnation in the struggle. As Cohen notes: " It is not an obvious proposition that a lack of constant

co-operation is evidence either of political apathy or political impotence; on the contrary, it may attest to a degree of political sophistication." [103]

The dominance of the metropolis was evident in the dependent and unequal relationship between Guiana and Britain. The mother country capitalised upon this relationship to secure her interests in the colony. In this relationship, imperial authority was used in an attempt to influence the way trade unionism developed. Planters used their influence in the Colonial Office and their dominance of the local legislature to delay or make ineffective labour and other legislation.

At the metropolitan level, the British government resorted to direct intervention when it was perceived that the interests of the ruling class or British sovereignty was threatened. The increased politicisation of trade unions during the 20s, followed by the ascendancy of a non-white majority in the legislature, convinced the mother country that such a threat existed in Guiana during the period 1926-1928. The British government intervened and took control through restrictive legislation which minimised the influence of the people's elected representative and placed additional power in the hands of the Governor, the Crown's representative.

However, it became obvious that the working people were determined to continue the struggle. They constantly sought avenues to solve their problems and, in the process, liberate themselves from imperial domination. Britain responded by attempting to take control of organised labour through financial control [104] and an attempt to limit the influence of union

leadership through the process of co-opting the labour movement within the general design for colonial development.

The state of Labour During the late 1930s

The reforms in labour relations which the British government initiated for Guiana, did not go far enough to guarantee the long-term development of the unions in their bid to provide effective representation for the workers. For example, the extent to which the TUC was able to aid the colonial unions was largely dictated by the Colonial Office. In the 1930s the Colonial Office policy on colonial labour was designed to control and guide trade union development in a predetermined direction. The policy aimed at giving recognition to the colonial labour leaders only to the extent that such recognition served the purpose of the British authorities.

The Labour Officials who were appointed also posed a problem. Many, although some served in the region, were unfamiliar with numerous aspects of colonial labour issues. In addition, it was clear that a number of the 'experts' on colonial labour, collaborated with the local governments in implementing labour policies which did not adequately address the demands of the workers and their representatives.

Another important consideration was the attitude of the local officials to the development of workers' organisations. The Secretary of State was concerned about aiding the development of trade unionism and collective bargaining. However, the colonial administrators and even some of the Labour Advisers in Guiana regarded the workers' activities within trade union organisations as treasonous. [105] Throughout the 1930s, union leaders were

continuously shadowed by the police, " and the mildest utterance may provoke a prosecution for sedition. " [106] The authorities capitalised upon this to prohibit street processions during labour demonstration. [107]

Further, labour leaders were subjected at will, to all forms of discrimination. Many were restricted from travelling to neighbouring colonies on temporary fraternal visits. [108] The good intentions of the Colonial Office were virtually meaningless to the West Indian workers unless there were officers who were willing and capable of implementing the recommendations outlined in the circulars. The Labour Advisers were expected to form an effective link between the workers and the employers. The reality in the West Indies was that they were largely unsuccessful in the territories where the unions were not strong or large enough to effectively threaten the employers with strike action. In Guiana, during the 1930s, only the BGLU and the MPCA attained such stature.

The adjustments which were made in labour legislation as a result of the recommendations of the Royal Commission, [109] were largely ineffective. The comments of the TUC's Colonial Advisory Committee on the BRITISH GUIANA LABOUR ORDINANCE, which was implemented, are instructive. These comments were made in response to a request by the representatives of the major unions for an analysis of the Labour Ordinance. [110] The Committee noted:

(1) This Ordinance does not amend, repeal or consolidate existing labour laws, save three. Possibly there are no others. If this is so, it is well to see that a start is being made with the assumption by the state of greater responsibility in law for industrial welfare in British Guiana.

(ii) The Ordinance allows the Governor to create an Industrial Welfare Department. One notes that Inspectors may be appointed without such labour laws are likely to be ineffective.

(iii) The Labour Commissioner is given power to intervene in disputes, which is a break with the policy of non-interference. There are not the usual provisions for conciliation boards whose findings, even if not accepted bring public opinion to bear on the parties at loggerheads.

(iv) The Ordinance needs to be considered as part of the Industrial Welfare Legislation and Administration in force in the colony. If reinforced by united collective action of organised workers, it may perform valuable service. [111]

It was difficult for the British government to ignore the widespread nature and popularity of the strikes and the urgency of the workers' demands which emerged throughout the British West Indies in the decades of the 20s and 30s. In Guiana, the Ruimveldt Incident was by far the most widespread and organised during the period. It was clear to the Colonial Office and local officials that the workers were better organised and their demands were straightforward and effectively articulated. These developments, through their revolutionary potential, commanded the attention of the authorities in Britain.

However, dissatisfaction over reforms proposed by the Secretary of State forced labour leaders to align their unions to the political movement in an attempt to initiate desirable changes from within. During the period (the late 1930s) national issues such as universal adult suffrage, the opening up of the interior through the promotion of hinterland projects, and the implementation of a relevant education system, accessible to all children within the school age limits, were actively pursued. The

developments of this period were part of the move to make the country truly '*Guianese*' in character, and also create the foundation for the independence movement.

These objectives were reinforced by a renewed country-wide appeal to the masses for the creation of a national political platform to give the working people greater representation. This call was made in an attempt to widen the narrow representation offered by the MPCA through the creation of a political Party which was representative of the entire country. The formation of the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) [112] was an important step in this direction. In many ways this proto-political party was essentially the embryo and forerunner of the People's Progressive Party (PPP), [113] the first mass based, multi-racial political party in Guiana.

The politicisation of the struggle was necessary in the light of the central role of 'politics' and ideology in the production relations and export patterns in Guiana. These issues were as significant as the demands for wages and improved working conditions. Also, the question of 'democracy' and representation for the majority constituted a central issue in working people's solidarity. This nationalist appeal was therefore necessary because of its potential in bringing about radical democratic changes and the subsequent empowerment of the working people.

FOOTNOTES

1. Ashton Chase, A History of Trade Unionism in Guyana 1900 to 1961 (Georgetown: New Guyana Company Ltd., 1964.) p. 73.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., quoted in Report of the British Guiana and West Indies Labour Conference, 1926.
4. PRO: C.O.111/663, 'Report of Kumar Maraj Singh on his Deputation to British Guiana in 1925.'
5. See for example Lewis, Labour in the West Indies...
6. Peter Weiler, British Labour and the Cold War (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1988.) pp. 28-29.
7. Ibid.
8. Sir C.P. Lucas (ed.) Lord Durham's Report on the Affairs of British North America (London: Clarendon Press, 1912.)
9. W.H. Morris-Jones, " *Trade Unions and Politics.* " University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, January to May 1987, No. 3. Collected Seminar Papers on Labour Unions and Political Organisations.
10. For a discussion see chapter iii.
11. Morris-Jones, " *Trade Unions...* "
12. Weiler, British Labour... p. 30.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., p. 27.

18. Lewis, Labour in the West Indies... Sir Stafford Cripps was Legal Counsel for a number of Caribbean trade unions and labour leaders after 1937. He was also a patron of the International African Service Bureau (IASB), an anti-imperialist organisation based in London, and of which Jomo Kenyatta, George Padmore and C.L.R. James were among the leading activists.

Arthur Creech-Jones was one of the Labour MPs who took an interest in West Indian labour problems. He, like Cripps, was a patron of the IASB.

Sir Walter Citrine, General Secretary of the British TUC and member of the Moyne Commission, exercised enormous influence over West Indian labour leaders during the early years of trade unionism.

19. See [MRC] TUC File: MSS 292/972. 8/1 August 19, 1938, also Citrine to Von Eden MSS 292//972. 8/1. November 15, 1939.

20. See for example 'Petition to the Governor by the Workingmen's and Workingwomen's Association and Farmers' Associations " in PRO: C.O.111/686 No. 75068, February, 1930.

21. PRO: C.O.111/652 Governor's Report.

22. For example the participation of a representative of the BGEIA at the British Guiana and West Indies Labour Conference, hosted by the BGLU in Georgetown, 1926, see Chase, A History... p. 73.

23. K. Nehusi, " *Approaches to the Formation of Trade Unions and their Impact on Social and Political Development in Guyana, 1900-1940.* " Paper Present to the Society for Caribbean Studies, Fourteenth Annual Conference, 10-12 July 1990.

24. Ibid.

25. PRO: C.O.111/663, Singh's Report.

26. PRO: C.O.111/658, see extract from Daily Argosy, November 14, 1925.

27. Ibid.

28. PRO: C.O.111/663, Singh's Report.

29. PRO: C.O.111/658 extract from the Tribune, July 26, 1925 in enclosure no. 2.

30. Ibid., the article drew attention to the condemnation of the Commissioner of Education of " the colony's antiquated system of education. "

31. Ibid.

32. Harold Lutchman, From Colonialism to Co-operative Republic: Aspects of Political Development in Guyana (Puerto Rico: Institute of Caribbean Studies, 1974.) p. 77, quoted in Letter by Fairplay in Daily Chronicle October 6, 1921.
33. Ibid., p. 81, the Popular Party was founded by Nelson Cannon and A.R.F. Webber and supported by several black and coloured members of the Elective section of the Combined Court.
34. Ibid.
35. Daily Argosy February 4, 1927.
36. Lutchman, From Colonialism... p. 81.
37. Lutchman, p. 86, quoted in Daily Argosy October 9, 1926.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid., see Daily Argosy, October 17, 1926.
40. Ibid., p. 78, this organisation worked along with the BGEIA in providing representation for the East Indian community.
41. Letters published in the Daily Argosy September 18, 1926 and October 13, 1926 respectively.
42. Daily Argosy October 13, 1926.
43. Daily Chronicle October 12, 1921.
44. Lutchman, From Colonialism... p. 84, also Rodney, " *Masses in Action...*"
45. Members of the Popular Party were given this title because of the influence of its founder member Nelson Cannon.
46. Lutchman, p. 83.
47. Mohammed Shahabuddeen, Constitutional Development in Guyana 1621-1978 (Georgetown: Guyana Printers Ltd., 1978.) pp. 412-413, also Memorandum of the Elected Members of the Combined Court, 1928 Cmd. 3047, pp. 55-56; and Debates of the Combined Court July 14, 1927, p. 53.
48. Shahabuddeen, Constitutional... p. 412.
49. Ibid., p. 413.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. The press carried reports of public meetings in Georgetown and other parts of the country, see Daily Argosy October 7, 1926.

53. Comments by Fredericks of the Negro Progress Convention (NPC) in support of the Popular Party, Daily Argosy October 9, 1926.

54. Daily Argosy October 17, 1926.

55. Lutchman, From Colonialism... p. 89.

56. Shahabuddeen, Constitutional... p. 413.

57. Ibid., the existence of such special means was confirmed by the Report of the West India Royal Commission, 1897, C. 8655.

58. Ibid., pp. 413-414.

59. Ibid., p. 407, the broadening of the franchise by the 1891 Constitution, and its further liberalisation in 1909, together with the introduction in 1891 of direct election to the Court of Policy in place of indirect election by the elitist College of Electors, led to the progressive displacement of the European class from the legislature by representatives of the black and coloured sections of the community.

60. Shahabuddeen, Constitutional... p. 465, quoted in W.M. McMillan, Warning from the West Indies 1938, p. 57.

61. The British government imposed stringent restrictions upon American and other foreign companies wishing to invest in the bauxite and other industries in Guiana.

62. PRO: C.O.111/686 File No. 75068, 1930.

63. Ibid.

64. The Governor's Official Residence.

65. This building housed the National Assembly.

66. C.O.111/686 File No. 75068, letter of " Church Army Camp, British Guiana," December 2, 1929.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid., see Inspector General of Police Report on the Activities of Rev. C.N. Smith, February 4, 1930.

71. Ibid., " Report of the Interview Accorded to Mr. Claude Smith by His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government," in enclosure no. 2, February 26, 1930, also extract from Daily Chronicle in enclosure no. 1, February 5, 1930.

72. Ibid., Griffith played a leading role in workers' organisation during the Ruimveldt Incident. For example, during the strike and demonstration in Georgetown, he along with 'Professoer' Osbourne, addressed a section of the demonstrating workers at 'Bourda Green.' During the early 1920s, Griffith represented the Farmers section of the BGLU.

73. Also PANDIT, a religious leader in the East Indian (Hindu) community.

74. C.O.111/686.

75. PRO: C.O.111/687 File No. 75080, " BGLU Memoranda to the British Commonwealth Labour Conference, 1930."

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.

81. It was not unusual for domestics to work for 12-14 hours per day without break, see *ibid.*

82. Ibid.

83. Ibid.

84. [MRC] TUC File: MSS 292/972. 8/1, Thorne to Citrine, October, 1939.

85. Ibid.

86. Ibid.

87. Ibid

88. Ibid.

89. Ibid., (the British Guiana Workers League was registered in 1932.)

90. [MRC] TUC File: MSS 292/972. 8/1 President of the MPCA to the British Guiana Sugar Producers Association (BGSPA).

91. For example in 1938, there were 37 strikes (work stoppages) at Pln. Leonora, see Chase, A History... p. 85.

92. MSS 292/972 .8/1.

93. The union emerged to play an important role in the workers' dispute at Leonora: On February 13, 1939 firemen at Pln. Leonora (on the West Coast of Demerara) went on a half day strike in protest against their eleven and a half working day-other factory hands worked between nine and twelve hours per day. Other workers joined in and this incident escalated. During the negotiations, the workers insisted that Edun of the MPCA intervene on their behalf. See Seepersaud Singh, " *Twentieth Century Working Class Protest: The 1939 Riot at Leonora.*" Paper Presented at a M.A. Seminar, University of Guyana, Thursday July 18, 1985.

94. Quoted in the Annual Report of the MPCA.

95. [MRC] TUC File: MSS 292/972 8/1 President of the MPCA to BGSPA, 1939.

96. Ibid.

97. Ibid

98. [MRC] TUC File: MSS 292/972. 8/1, November 1939. The following unions were represented: British Guiana Workers League; BGLU; MPCA; The Transport Workers' Union of British Guiana; The British Guiana Seamen's Union; The British Guiana Bakers' Industrial Union and The British Guiana Moulders' Association.

99. The executive comprised of Mr. Ayube Edun, founder and President; Mr. Harri Barron, first General-Secretary; other officials included Mssrs. Edward Pile, R.N. Persaud, J.R. Singh, T.R. King, O. Ashby, Seemangal Maraj, O.N. Persaud, and the lone female Eleanor Sewdin who held the prominent position of Vice-President in 1939 and Treasurer in 1940, see Chase, A History... p. 86.

100. Rose Hall is a large East Indian community on the Corentyne Coast.

101. Lewis, Labour in the West Indies... p. 26.

102. The Royal Commission appointed 'to investigate Social and Economic Conditions in the West Indies' arrived in the region on Saturday 14 January, 1939 and continued investigatings until Thursday, 2 February (on the islands). The Commission which was headed by Lord Moyne arrived in Guiana on the 4 February. Arthur W. Lewis, Labour in the West Indies: The Birth of a Workers' Movement (London and Port-of-Spain: New Beacon Books). pp. 46-9 and 87.

103. Munck, The New International... p. 108, quoted in R. Cohen, Labour and Politics in Nigeria (London: Heinemann, 1974.)

104. This was in relation to the conditions attached to grants, loans and other financial support to the country.

105. Lewis, Labour in the West Indies... p. 39.

106. Ibid.

107. This strategy was employed in Trinidad, Guiana and many other territories of the region. See for example, Lewis, Labour in the West Indies... p. 39.

108. Arthur Lewis, " *The 1930s Social Revolution.*" in Beckles and Shepherd (eds.) Caribbean Freedom: Economy and Society from Emancipation to the Present. (Kingston Jamaica and London: James Currey Publishers, 1993.) p. 376. This situation reached such a level that the in 1926 at the 'British Guiana and West Indian Labour Conference,' the workers passed a resolution to set up a private telegraph code for communication between between the various 'Labour Organisations of British Guiana and the West Indies.'

109. The Commission recommended that there should be widespread reform in Labour Legislation throughout the Caribbean region, see West India Royal Commission Report, 1939.

110. TUC File: MSS 292/972. 8/1.,

111. Ibid., " Response of the Colonial Advisory Committee on the British Guiana Labour Ordinance."

112. The founding members of this organisation were: C. Jagan, J. Jagan, Jocelin Hubbard and Ashton Chase. See Jagan, The West On Trial... p. 64.

113. See Nehusi, Ph.D. dissertation, also Janet Jagan, " *Twelve Years of the PPP. An Account of the Party's Long Struggle Against Privilege and for the Rights of the People.*" (Georgetown: New Guiana Co. Ltd., 1961.) p. 3.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Buxton, Fyrish, Cove-an-John, Bush Lot, Mahaica,
no, ah said, Guyana, not Ghana.

Marc Matthews: *Guyana Not Ghana* in Burnett (ed.)
Caribbean Verse... p.48.

This chapter brings together the main issues discussed in the dissertation. The Incident is evaluated to establish its impact upon labour relations and the society as a whole. This is followed by an illustration of the way the 'dependent' relationship between colony and mother country resulted in close ties between these units, unequal development in Guiana and a denial of political representation to the citizens. The factors which contributed to the working people's unity in a nationalist struggle are also examined. Finally, I attempt to explore some of the ways in which international labour studies can approach labour investigation in a critical and creative way to account for the social and historical realities of developing countries such as Guyana.

The Ruimveldt Incident, revealed the tensions and contradictions which existed between the working people and the ruling class in Guiana. Throughout the history of the country, working people always explored ways of resisting exploitation and domination of every kind. The popular strike and demonstration in Georgetown brought together various strands of working people's struggle on the plantations (factory workers and the numerous field 'gangs'), and among city workers (domestics, dock workers, artisans, market vendors and the unemployed). These were united by the leadership provided by the BGLU and the BGEIA.

Workers from the East Bank embarked upon a march to the city

in an attempt to join their Georgetown counterparts. At this stage the workers presented demands which incorporated issues wider than those relating to wages and conditions of employment. In this way, they broke out of the limits of factory [and wharf] politics and integrated their objectives within a wider social mobilisation of the popular masses. [1]

The Incident is analysed in the context of the support derived from localised and covert forms of resistance waged by workers in every sphere of production. This is because much support in the organisation and execution of the Incident, was gained from the activities at the 'grassroots' level-often away from the place of employment and outside of the influence of the trade union. These features are important to working people's resistance because of the complex nature of the production regime and the ethnic composition of the Guianese working people.

During the period (1920s), capitalism was the dominant mode of production in the Guianese society, this mode, however, (although its effects were felt throughout the country) did not penetrate every aspect of production and exchange. With little support, Guianese have been able to conduct small scale agricultural production (such as the cultivation of ground provision, rice and sugar cane), in order to supplement wages from the plantation. These activities, through a lack of support and an unfair tax regime, were affected by the rulings of the state. Therefore in many ways, the issues which affected the workers had direct relevance to the welfare of a wider section of the community.

It is in this context that small farmers and unemployed

workers joined forces with striking workers during the Incident. Thus the concepts of 'class' and 'class consciousness' as applied to Guiana should be regarded in a wider and more 'fluid' context, involving not only workers' relation to the mode of production but also culture and social organisation. Through interaction in these areas working people were brought together in community groups which aided in shaping their perception of the nature of their exploitation.

The covert forms of protest or 'hidden forms of consciousness' [2] are inadequately represented in the industrial relations literature largely because these forms are 'less visible' and much more difficult to record and evaluate. This resulted in much emphasis being placed on the 'more obvious forms of class consciousness' and action within organised labour and trade union activities. This limitation is addressed in the dissertation through an investigation of the evolution of working people's organisation, with emphasis on social and cultural organisations at the community level-see chapter iv.

In addition, 'labour studies' of ex-colonies, should place less emphasis on the role of local Administrators and 'Labour Advisers' from Europe and give more attention to the day to day acts of resistance by workers both within the confines of their work situation and in the wider labour process. [3] The dissertation illustrates the way inadequate knowledge of local conditions and partiality to the colonial administration made these officials ineffective in Guiana.

In the process of evaluating 'day to day' acts of resistance however, care must be taken against the romantization

of these events. Many acts of sabotage or larceny from the plantation, are often disconnected, spontaneous, individualistic and with short term effect. [4] These therefore, as demonstrated in the dissertation, must be linked to the organisational structures of the working people in the struggle for improved working conditions and social justice. The value of these acts can also be seen in their capacity to act as signals to other workers and also their potential to disrupt the estate routine.

Cohen sees the hidden forms of protest " as part of an incremental chain of consciousness leading towards a 'higher' more politicized form of consciousness. " [5] In Guiana, because of planters' exploitation and metropolitan intervention to suppress working people's demands for constitutional reform, covert acts aided in maintaining workers', solidarity and the continuation of the struggle at a level not easily detected by the authorities.

Although the strike action was sparked off by demands for increased wages and better working conditions, the workers were conscious of the factors which kept wages at a minimum and made them ineffective in implementing desirable changes. Therefore, an attack on the colonial state had a special appeal to workers of every orientation because all suffered from legislation designed to promote the interest of the European minority in the society. A significant feature of this policy, was the way it aided in keeping Guiana in a 'dependent' state with the metropolis.

The dominant role of the mother country in this *dependent* relationship was demonstrated in the way the state used the

military in a general display of force to bring an end to the demonstration at Ruimveldt bridge. From a very early period in the colony's history, the colonial authorities saw coercion and open display of force as necessary in maintaining social order. The coercive power of the state was seen in the fact that for much of the colonial period expenditure on education never exceeded 7.5 percent of the total annual budget, whereas that on the police and judiciary varied from 14 to 25 percent. [6]

In Guiana, the armed units which were at the disposal of the plantocracy and the entire white community consisted of the 'Colonial Militia,' the 'Police Force,' the 'Estates Armed Force,' the 'Volunteer Force,' and the Imperial Troops comprised of both white regiments from Britain and the black West India Regiment. [7]

The majority of the senior officers were Europeans. This was because the white population could not trust the black and coloured members of the force to be partial in dealing with incidents involving the citizens. The authorities consistently adhered to the principle that there should always be adequate representation of Europeans in the armed forces. [8]

The way members of the Police Force responded to working people's protests was informed by the belief of many superior officers that arm response was often the most effective. As the Inspector-General stated in 1882: " the mere fact of an armed police force putting in an appearance in a district which is in a disturbed state is now sufficient of itself to restore order..." [9] This attitude persisted during the 1920s. The events, discussed in chapter v, and the analysis in chapter vi

revealed workers' awareness of this response by the authorities.

An important aspect of working people's consciousness was also their recognition of the need for co-operation across racial and ethnic boundaries in their pursuit of common objectives. This has been achieved in spite of the claim that race was the primary factor of social segmentation in post-emancipation Guiana. Such considerations were also responsible for the isolation and insulation of the several social groups behind ethnic boundaries, across which there was very little social interaction. [10] The dissertation shows that in 1924 working people crossed these boundaries. This was made possible through their desire to improve the quality of their lives and a shared commitment to the development of the country. Throughout the 1920s they co-operated in presenting working people's issues at the extra-parliamentary forum because they were denied effective representation in the legislature.

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, significant changes in ethnic relations were witnessed among members of the two dominant sections of the working people—the Africans and East Indians. According to Moore: " By the 1890s, the old biracial three-tier *creole* social matrix was clearly modified in a socio-cultural continuum by shared creolized values, mores, beliefs, etc...." [11]

Chapter four identifies the influence of the 'creolization' process in a number of developments, locally and internationally, which helped to foster this new outlook in ethnic relations and aided in bringing about the high degree collaboration witnessed during the Incident. On the local scene, attention can be drawn

to the increase in the number of East Indians who moved into African villages or communities adjoining these villages, and a strong commitment of members of this group to settle in the country instead of returning to India after the termination of their contract. At the international level, the contribution of organisations such as the UNIA and exposure of Guianese servicemen and students overseas, aided in working people's awareness of British racism and afforded them a closer insight into the nature of the mother country's policy on colonial development. On these issues, the Africans and East Indians were on common ground.

By the 1920s, unemployment and the nature of exploitation-low wages, arbitrary dismissals, and deplorable working conditions-also aided in bringing the working people closer in struggle. Africans and East Indians found themselves in the unemployment queues at the dock yard and the estate compound. Unemployed workers, took an active role in the 'unemployment demonstrations' which were organised by the trade unions, and workers journeyed from various rural communities to the headquarters of the BGLU where they signed the unemployment register and briefed Critchlow and the other union leaders about labour conditions on estates along the East Coast and East Bank Demerara. During the months leading to the Ruimveldt Incident, workers (mainly East Indians) also visited the headquarters of the BGEIA in Georgetown.

These activities brought workers of all races together in a national show of solidarity, collectively exploring avenues to gain relief from unemployment and rising cost of living. The

BGLU and the BGEIA, through their public meetings and community gatherings, were able to perform the function of educating the workers about the nature of their struggle and the source of their exploitation. Working people made the connection between the capitalist domination of production and other activities and inadequate employment opportunities, poor housing and the general deplorable conditions they were forced to endure in the society.

These developments in working people's relations, reached a high point during the Ruimveldt Incident, in the way workers were able to dismiss racial differences and concentrated their resources towards overcoming issues which pertained to their struggle and impacted on their lives in equal measure irrespective of their ethnicity or occupation. The workers presented a '*class*' front to capitalist domination.

The open demonstration of force by the authorities and the unwillingness of employers to negotiate with working people's delegations, convinced the workers that it was necessary for them to be organised in strong and legally constituted bodies. The concessions won by the BGLU on behalf of waterfront workers through bargaining with the employers, were carefully noted by estate workers. In addition, many labour leaders observed the effectiveness of the Georgetown strike action through the use of 'pickets' and lawful demonstration. They were convinced that this was the way for workers to present their demands instead of the unco-ordinated strategy adopted in the past. This feature of the activities informed the wave of new and better organised trade unions which emerged during the late 1920s and 30s.

Although the Incident itself did not pose any major threat to British rule in Guiana, it was significant for workers' organisation and the nature of colonial rule. The events clearly demonstrated to the authorities that a unified labour movement had the potential of challenging planter control and eventually, colonial rule. The level of organisation which the workers displayed and the general appeal of the leaders, signalled to the authorities the workers' intention of taking their struggle to the national level. These developments compelled the Colonial Office to formulate clearer guidelines to monitor labour development in Guiana and the Caribbean region.

Working people clearly demonstrated that they were united on almost every issue of national importance. For example on the issue of education, there was major concern by community groups and organisations throughout the country. In the 1920s, *Indian Opinion* [12] launched an attack on the government for keeping the East Indian masses in a state of illiteracy. It pointed out that out of 20,000 children of East Indian parentage of school going age, only 6,000 were attending school. [13] In this issue, communal anger was jointly directed against the colonial regime, because at the same time, the African masses were involved in a struggle to lay the foundations of a more democratic educational system, rejecting the " Payment by Results" [14] and other limitations which were in vogue since the Elementary Education Ordinance of 1876. [15] On these issues, the struggle of the teachers was not only on their own behalf, but for a system of education which would benefit their pupils and the country. The BGLU also joined the call for a better system of education. [16]

On the issue of the curriculum, the East Indian community campaigned for Indian languages to be taught. The Teachers' Association supported the East Indians demands when R. French argued that unless steps were taken to teach Indian languages, the latter would disappear as the African languages of the 'slaves' had disappeared and the community would be the poorer. [17] A united approach to these issues indicated that the working people were seriously addressing themselves to an examination of where they stood, of what they possessed of value and of what changes were desirable. [18]

The African and East Indian masses were involved in a process of 'self-realization' which was taking place in a framework of 'racial grouping' rather than in the context of 'nation.' That process of communal self-realisation did not inevitably bring the races into conflict, nor retard the formation of organisations along class lines, nor weaken the struggle against colonialism. [19]

Organised in this way, the working people achieved a landmark victory at the general election in 1926. Commenting upon this victory, A.R.F. Webber—one of Guiana's historians and a leading politician of the period—noted that the elections of October 1926 " was fought with unexampled ferocity...the declaration at the polls showed a sweeping victory for the Popular Party; and a complete and devastating rout of their opponents who were well possessed of this world's goods." [20]

This victory was significant because of the way it demonstrated that it was possible for a wide section of the working people to be represented in the legislature through the

liberalisation of the franchise. In addition, Guianese who qualified for the franchise supported the 'Popular Party' because of its popular manifesto, rather than on racial factors.

The dissertation also illustrates the workers' struggle against foreign monopoly in the economic development of the country. The economy suffered from the ills of monoculture. Economies outside of sugar- such as bauxite, precious minerals and rice cultivation-displayed promising signs as viable alternatives to sugar, but they were not given the necessary support. Development priorities were decided by the British parliament. Even economic projects which were proposed by the local authorities had to satisfy the mother country's 'strict' test of economic viability.

It has been shown that every aspect of life in the colonial state was influenced by the mother country through its official representatives and the presence of the white minority in the society. For example in the context of a colonial (and) plantation society such as Guiana, the exercise of real political power was monopolised by the planter class and the imperial government represented by appointed officials. The attitude and role of the imperial government was critical in preserving white political dominance in the colonial society. Racial considerations were also vital in determining both the political pre-eminence of the white planters and in retaining the supreme legislative power of the imperial Crown since the non-white majority were not considered sufficiently qualified or 'civilised' to exercise political power. [21]

The dominant white plantocracy was thus allowed to exercise

state power, subject only to the authority of the Crown, to perpetuate their own hegemony by seeking to deny the non-white subordinate categories political rights and privileges as equal colonial subjects that is, the vote and membership in colonial political institutions. [22] The interests of the working people were only given attention after direct representation to the metropolitan authorities through the Colonial Office.

The ruling white minority employed the apparatus of the colonial state in a systematically repressive manner to subjugate the non-white majority. Thus the Crown Lands' Regulations were designed to confine the working people to the plantation belt and so limit their economic opportunities outside of the sugar industry. [23] The implementation of a land policy which placed an artificially high price on crown lands and prohibiting its purchase in parcels of less than 100 acres, was deliberately designed to prevent the growth of a peasant population independent of the estates. [24]

It is instructive to note however, that the peasant sector was often expected to lend a hand in the struggle for the survival of the sugar industry. The rent and leases peasant cultivators paid for the provision grounds they cultivated were often increased without warning, depending upon the state of the industry. Planters used their influence in the legislature to impose taxes on huckstering, animal drawn carts and many other economic ventures [25] which working people normally resorted to in order to supplement inadequate wages from the estates. Working people were even saddled with the burden of meeting the economic cost of importing immigrant workers. [26]

Such policies were implemented virtually unchallenged by the mother country. The object was to safeguard the survival of the sugar industry which was foreign owned and organised to satisfy the needs of an overseas market. The nature and demands of this market influenced the way it was organised in Guiana and also the welfare of the working people, who, by necessity, were forced to rely on this industry. Village laws and rate system imposed a stultifying economic burden on the peasant/small-farming sector, and subjected the villagers to the direct political control of the white colonial government. High taxation was calculated to suppress the working people economically, and to force them to depend on plantation labour for survival. [27]

The dependent nature of the colony upon the metropolis was further reinforced by the nature in which sugar production was conducted. The specialised nature of this industry did not facilitate the 'spread' of skills and resources to other industrial ventures in the colony. For example it was not possible for the large investment in equipment to be transferred to other uses. Quintin Hogg, a prominent sugar proprietor in Guiana noted: " I do not think it would pay me, to sacrifice all my machinery and all my outlay and go into another crop for which that machinery would be perfectly useless." [28] The attitude of most planters therefore, was to extract as much profits from the estates and abandoned them when they became unprofitable. [29]

Such was the attitude of a predominantly absentee proprietorship. Earnings not reinvested in the plantations were, for the most part, transferred to Britain. In addition, connections in the mother country made it possible for absentee

planters to negotiate valuable financial and other support for the colonial plantations. This support, however, was concentrated on developments within the sugar industry instead of promoting developments-such as small scale sugar production or artisans within the villages-which had the potential of creating jobs for unemployed villagers and spread the benefits generated by the plantation to the majority of the people in the society.

In accordance with the World Systems theory, the dissertation explores Guiana's role as a *Plantation Economy* responding to the demands of the mother country. Its role as *Plantation Hinterland* was centred around the production of sugar for refining in Britain and other European countries. Links were external and almost exclusively controlled by Companies such as Bookers, McConnell Ltd., and Sanbach Parker Co. Ltd., which were the parent firms-based in Britain-involved in the industry in Guiana. The self-contained character of the production unit resulted in specific patterns in the markets for commodities, labour, land and capital, and corresponding patterns of price and wage formation, capital accumulation and technical change. [30] Trends in Europe and also metropolitan policies on such issues affected these features in Guiana and hence the quality of life of the citizens.

The relations between Guiana (plantation hinterland) and Britain were defined by institutional rules of exclusive trading arrangements. [31] This was necessary to secure the transfer of surplus to Britain. Because of rivalry among competing colonising European powers, these rules were enforced by the military and naval power of Great Britain. The ultimate sanction of military

intervention was manifested whenever any threat-real or perceived-emerged to disrupt the efficient operation of these activities. Such an intervent was deemed necessary during the Ruimveldt Incident when the Governor summoned a British war ship from the British fleet based in Bermuda. [32]

The general organisation of the commercial links between colony and mother country was regulated by the '*Mercantilist Framework*' which was based on the following: '*Division of Labour,*' '*Carriage of Trade,*' '*Monetary System,*' and '*Imperial Preference.*' [33]

Under the rules of division of labour, Guiana's economic activity was confined to '*terminal activity,*' that is primary production (termed the *Muscavado Bias* [34]) at the beginning of the spectrum of production. From this stage the commodity was integrated forward to final product markets in Europe.

The sugar produced in the country was transported exclusively by metropolitan carriers and associated services such as wharf and storage facilities controlled by metropolitan intermediaries. " This control of transportation and the distribution systems is a principal weapon of oligopolistic competition of multinational corporations." [35] These activities were financed by metropolitan banks and non-banking financial intermediaries.

Chapter three examines the way '*Imperial Preference*'-the system under which exports entered the metropole at lower tariffs than rival output-emerged to be a major source of concern for the planters and working people in Guiana. [36] Changes in metropolitan policy on the entry of colonial goods into Britain-

in pursuit of a policy of *Free Trade*- and also the amount of metropolitan goods entering the colony, [37] affected the production of the main crop and deprived the colony from exploring more lucrative 'foreign' markets.

Under these conditions, working people struggle was directed at improving the quality of their lives through constant protest and petitions to the employers, and taking the initiative to promote growth within those economies which were neglected by the state. They were conscious of their inability to influence decisions at the governmental level because of their under representation at this forum. The quest to correct this situation through the admission of working people's representatives to the legislature, formed a significant part of the popular agenda during the decades following the Incident. These developments are examined in chapters vi and vii.

The events of the 1930s in particular represent a significant development in the progress of the working people as free agents battling against considerable odds. In many ways, the achievements of this period-the emergence of new trade unions; a new direction in the policy of the Colonial Office towards colonial labour development; and Representative Government Associations that were established- have been the results of a process set in motion at the beginning of the twentieth century and gained momentum during the 1920s. These developments also constituted the organisational structures which created the foundation for the politics which took Guiana into the era of political independence.

The historical approach which is adopted revealed that the

relationship between Guiana and Britain was dynamic and changed over time in an effort to accommodate changing circumstances locally and internationally. In this process, the working people, should be given much of the credit for their role in compelling the mother country to consider workers' issues through the popularity of their struggle. This central role of the working people in Guiana's development, highlights one of the criticisms the 'world systems' analysis which points the way towards social action in bringing about desirable changes.

The dissertation makes a contribution to the literature on 'dependency,' in the way it was able to demonstrate that the working people in Guiana recognised the causes of their dependent state and organised to improve their situation through confrontation with the authorities, their employers and those who supported a system designed to keep them in a state of underdevelopment. Central to their strategy was the politicisation of the trade unions through an appeal to the masses.

Working people's representatives within the legislature, created the foundations for increased political participation at the national level. A significant feature of this phase of the struggle was the role of women (of various ethnic origin) in 'discussion groups' and 'pressure groups' campaigning for specific political demands. In spite of the constitution setback in 1928, the lessons in political organisation resulted in significant long-term gains in working people's representation.

For example, by 1935 prominent trade unionists were presenting working people's issues in the Legislative Council.

Critchlow, was nominated in 1943, C.R. Jacobs and Ayube Edun entered the legislature in 1935 and 1943 respectively. Other developments of the period (the late 1930s-1940s) included the interest shown by influential individuals of the community in politics and the return of students and servicemen from overseas, eager to lend a hand in their country's development. Emerging to lead the struggle at this stage were outstanding Guianese such as Cheddi Jagan and his wife Janet, Ashton Chase, Winnifred Gaskin and Jocelyn Hubbard, Martin Carter, Frances Stafford, W.O.R. Kendall and Eusi Kwayana. [38]

Their main concern was based upon the creation of a national political forum to articulate the demands of the Guianese masses. Out of this desire emerged, in the 1940s, the weekly discussion group at the Carnegie Library. [39] This forum was used for open discussion and critical evaluation of the impact of the colonial administration on the fortunes of the working people.

Through the initiative of Janet Jagan and Winnifred Gaskin the 'Women's Political and Economic Organisation' (WPEO) was launched on July 12, 1946. [40] The aim of the organisation was to ensure the political organisation and education of women in Guiana in order to promote their economic welfare and their political and social emancipation and betterment. [41] The members were active in Georgetown and the country districts, encouraging women to register as voters for the 1947 election. In the long term, the organisation mobilised women from various charitable organisations to exert pressure on local government to bring about improvements in social welfare and housing conditions. [42]

Complementing the activities of the WPEO were a number of Improvement and Welfare Associations. There was also the People's Free Press which was established in 1948. However, the most important organisation was the PAC. The objective of the Association was " to assist the growth and development of the labour and progressive movements of British Guiana, to the end of establishing a strong disciplined and enlightened Party, equipped with the theory of Scientific Socialism." [43] The emergence of the PAC signalled the revitalisation of Guianese nationalism through the appeal to the '*working class*' [44] and the wide range of issues which were included in the organisation's political agenda.

Through the activities of the PAC and other organisations such as the WPEO, which impacted upon the effectiveness of campaigning and country-wide demonstrations, Jagan was elected to the Legislative Council after the general election in 1947. [45]

This victory marked the beginning of a long, determined and difficult struggle towards the formation of the People's Progressive Party (PPP), the first mass based political party in the country. [46] The PPP emerged victorious at the general election in 1953, held for the first time under full adult suffrage. Although the country's constitution was suspended after 133 days of the Jagan administration, this was an important victory for the people. Commenting upon the outcome of the election, Jagan noted: " The...campaign roused unprecedented enthusiasm throughout the country. For the first time in our history the people were really involved... " [47] The victory was

an important step towards independence and an end to colonial rule.

Labour Development

A significant aspect of the analysis in this dissertation is the role of trade unions in organising workers, peasants and other sections of the working people. The extent to which the industrial relations literature represent the nature of workers' organisation in Guiana is given some attention in this section.

The social relations in Guiana, as in other parts of the Caribbean, reflected a combination of modern capitalist form with the more traditional forms reminiscent of the unfree labour regimes of slavery and indentureship. According to Munck, " While in advanced industrialised societies attention is focused on 'deindustrialization' and the 'collapse of work,' in the Third World proletarianization is still advancing. " [48] It is important therefore, to ' extend' the definition of the concept 'proletariat' to reflect the reality of the area under study. In the case of Guiana, such definition must take into consideration not only waged workers but also small farmers, part- time workers, self-employed and some unemployed workers. The role of of women as house keepers and their participation in small scale economic ventures should also be considered.

This is relevant because of the historical role of these 'groups' in the struggle against colonialism. Throughout the Caribbean the people, whether they were enslaved or laboured under the indentureship system, have consistently struggled to define themselves either within culturally distinctive *communities* or as members of family *lines* -that is, they have

not *generally* responded to the plantation regimen in terms of their 'class' identity but along other dimensions of social affiliation. [49]

Attention can be drawn to the way Africans who were forced into the environment of the Caribbean plantations—a society capitalist oriented in some respects, yet rooted in the need for unfree labour—perceived liquid capital and property (mainly land) not only as a means of obtaining their freedom, but also, as a way of asserting their identity as useful citizens in the society. In this respect, the creation of peasantries can be considered an act of resistance because it was designed to liberate the Africans from the plantation routine.

The dissertation shows that during the early decades of the twentieth century freed East Indian immigrant workers joined their African counterparts in staking a claim in the country of their adoption. At the individual level this form of resistance was manifested in 'master craftsmen,' skilled cane cutters, blacksmiths, shovel men and other estate workers, defining themselves in terms of what they knew and could do. Although these complex relations make it difficult to formulate a typology of Guianese and Caribbean peasantries, they show the way in which these peasantries may be evaluated historically: "namely, by assessing the means used by Caribbean masses to resist a system designed to destroy their identity as human beings." [50]

Given these historical factors, classes in colonial societies such as Guiana, should not be considered as fixed, but socially and historically structured relations of power and domination. One must thoroughly understand the particular society

one is considering, and know the evidence about it at first hand, before one can expect to identify its classes correctly and precisely. [51] Classes must also be located within the international context of production and exchange. " The emphasis on lived reality rather than 'structural determination' must be carried through from the international level to the national, regional and local dimensions." [52]

Internationalism is not an abstract principle but a theoretical and political reflection of the character of the world economy, of the world development of productive forces and the world scale of the class struggle. [53] However, although class relations take an international form, it is misleading to assume there are in existence 'global classes' as the 'world systems' theory implies. [54] On this issue Connel concludes: " The international solidarity of exploited groups and progressive movements has to be constructed in a more piecemeal and painful way. " [55]

Another important concept which is investigated in the dissertation is 'working peoples' consciousness.' Consciousness is never simple or obvious. According to Laclau:

There is no a priori, necessary relation, between the discourses which constitute the worker, for example, as a militant or as a technical agent in the workplace, and those which determine his attitude towards politics, racial violence, sexism and other spheres in which the agent is active. [56]

In Guiana during the 1920s the priority of the relations of production was very complex. Planters were promoting certain groups in the society at the expense of others; Africans (who pursued wage labour for much longer than many other groups in the

society) approached labour issues in a different way to their East Indian counterparts (many of whom were recently freed of their indentured obligations by 1924.)

This resulted in a situation in which working peoples' consciousness developed in an uneven way. For a significant part of the period under study, the African workers emerged to be more 'advanced' than other groups in the society. For example when Africans were actively negotiating terms of employment, acceptable wage rates and organised to achieve these goals, other groups of workers were restricted to the plantation through contractual commitments and the harsh regime of indentureship.

The historical evidence revealed, however, that the common source of working peoples' exploitation-the plantocracy-contributed to a combination of the various 'strands' of workers' consciousness. For example when the dock workers became unionised and launched collective action, the struggle of estate workers from the East Bank of Demerara and other rural communities, was reinforced through the spread effect of this development.

The international nature of capitalist development, a significant feature of the 'world systems' theory, has contributed to the development of working people's consciousness. The relative ease with which people moved from one region to the other, the economic, political and social links between the colony and the mother country and the impact of the popular press, exposed workers to 'revolutionary' ideologies which exercised a profound influence on the way they perceived their own exploitation. The dissertation also evaluates the role

the church and churchmen played in this process. However, it would be futile to seek for a simple progression of class consciousness along the lines of a European or Latin American model.

In a significant way (by emphasising the activities of small farmers, artisans, the unemployed and female workers and their role in covert forms of protest on the plantations and in Georgetown) the analysis contained in the dissertation has contributed to the new trend in the theoretical literature on working people's response to colonialism. In this approach, social movements other than labour or nationalist have come to the fore across the globe-women, peace, ecology, human-rights, neighbourhood communities and others. In their different ways these have all expanded the boundaries of politics and indeed, led to a new way of 'doing politics.' [57]

Drawing attention to this trend in India D.L. Seth notes how the new social movements in that country

are blazing a new trail, illuminating a new terrain of politics and evolving a new mode of politics, bypassing legal and territorial definitions, and bringing new constituencies into the political arena around new definitions of the issues and contents of politics. [58]

The common threads contained in this new approach include the politicisation of social relations ('the personal is political') and the political realm is becoming 'socialised' as people increasingly seek control over different areas of their lives. New forms of struggle are being articulated in all these new movements and the questions of grassroots democracy, participation and accountability emerge.

Specific forms of oppression are now recognised rather than being subsumed under a generic 'struggle for socialism', and the value of autonomy is stressed, rejecting a subordination of social struggle to political parties. [59] Post-colonial societies are increasingly wary of that neo-universalist internationalism which subsumes them within monocentric or European-dominated networks of politics and culture. " The fiction of national essences is rejected for the more refractory and syncretic complexes of ordinary experience...[60] Social movements at the community level played a central role in the Workers' Incident at Ruimveldt and are highlighted in the dissertation.

In this process, the culture of the people constitute a central feature. The reconstruction of events revealed that the culture and interaction among the various sections of the working people facilitated their coming together in struggle. Thus subscribing to Cabral's interpretation of liberation struggle as a historical and cultural resistance in the sense that struggle also embraced the objective of freeing the society and its values from foreign domination. [61] He states:

The great force of culture as an instrument of national resistance derives from its ideological appeal in terms of its ability to reflect history. Its political force is enhanced because it has great influence in determining relationships between people and nature, between one person and another, among groups in society and among societies in the international community. [62]

The discussion and analysis contained in this dissertation contribute to the literature on resistance to colonialism which establishes that capitalism did not bring about a homogeneous

'working class' in the ex-colonial states. In order to analyse the struggle of the various sections which comprised this class, it is necessary to extend the investigation beyond the realm of economic relations and take into consideration the interaction of cultural forms and organisation at the level of the 'grassroots.' In this process, the writer must utilise the analytical tools of several disciplines-history, politics, anthropology, sociology and cultural studies-in the quest to adequately represent the historical developments taking place in countries of the 'developing world.'

FOOTNOTES

1. See Ronaldo Munck, The New International Labour Studies An Introduction. (London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1988.) p. 136, quoted in F. Rojas, "Colombie: Etat et syndicats a la recherche de nouvelles armes", Amerique Latine, 1981, No. 7, p. 59.
2. Robin Cohen, "Resistance and Hidden Forms of Consciousness Amongst African Workers," Review of African Political Economy 19, Sept/Dec., 1980.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Brian Moore, Race, Power and Social Segmentation in Colonial Society Guiana After Slavery 1838-1891. (Philadelphia: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1992.) p. 202, quoted in Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves... p. 243.
7. Moore, Race...
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., p. 206, quoted in Enc. in C.O.111/423, Young to Kimberley, No. 113, 24 April, 1882.
10. Moore, Race... p. 214.
11. Ibid. p. 219.
12. Walter Rodney, 'Masses in Action' in George Laming and Martin Carter (eds.) New World Quarterly Guyana Independence Issue. (Georgetown: New World Group Associates, 1966.) p. 36, also Mr Kunwar Maraj Singh's (Indian Colonisation Delegate) Address to the BGEIA in PRO: C.O.111/658, see extract from Daily Argosy November 14, 1925.
13. Rodney, 'Masses in Action.' p. 36.
14. Ibid., p. 37.
15. Ibid., for a discussion of the issues relating to this Ordinance, see Hazel M. Woolford, 'Social Issues Behind 1876 Compulsory Education Bill.' Paper Presented at the M.A. Seminar in Guyanese History, Thursday November 26, 1981, University of Guyana.
16. See 'Report of the BGLU to the British Commonwealth Labour Conference, 1930, in C.O.111/687 File No. 75080.
17. Rodney, 'Masses in Action.' p. 37.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., quoted in A.R.F. Weber, Centenary History an Handbook of British Guiana (Georgetown: 1931.)

21. Ibid., p. 215.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., p. 258.

24. Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves... p. 258.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Moore, Race... p. 216.

28. Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves... p. 258, quoted in PP (1898), 50 (C.8655) : 16.

29. Ibid., quoted in PP (1878-79), 53 (C.32) : 214-15.

30. Keri Levitt and Lloyd Best, " *Character of the Caribbean Economy*," in H. Beckles and V. Shepherd (eds.) Caribbean Freedom: Economy and Society From Emancipation to the Present (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 1993.) pp. 405-420.

31. Ibid.

32. See Governor's Report on the Ruimveldt Workers' Incident in PRO: C.O.111/652, April 1924. Throughout the colonial period Britain maintained military facilities in various locations in the Caribbean.

33. Levitt and Best, " *Character of the Caribbean...*"

34. Ibid., this term is derived from the name of the sugar produced in the region.

35. Ibid.

36. For example in 1846 when Britain equalised the duties on all sugar entering the British market. Sugar from the West Indies lost its favoured position and faced unfavourable competition from sugar produced in places such as Puerto Rico, Brazil and Cuba. See Moore, Race.. pp. 31-32, also Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves... p. 214.

37. Because of restrictions on colonial trade, by 1914 Britain was the main supplier of goods to the West Indian colonies. For example in that year the UK was the largest exporter to and importer from Guiana, St. Vincent, Grenada, the Leewards, and the largest exporter to Barbados and Trinidad. These colonies were restricted in conducting trade with the USA and Canada where goods were cheaper and more accessible. See Peter Fraser, "Some Effects of the First World War on the British West Indies." Paper Presented at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London, (During the Autumn and Spring Terms 1979.)

38. These individuals emerged as influential political figures in the independence movement.

39. Jagan, The West on Trial... p. 64.

40. Linda Peake, "The Development and Role of Women's Political Organisations in Guyana," in Janet A. Momsen, Women and Change in the Caribbean. (London: James Currey Ltd., 1993.) p. 114.

41. Ibid., also R. Kilkenny, "Women in Social and Political Struggle: British Guiana 1946-1953." Paper Presented at the 16th Annual Conference of Caribbean Historians, Barbados 1984.

42. Ibid., see also C. Earle, "Women in Guyana's Politics." Caribbean Contact December 19, 1977.

43. Jagan, The West on Trial... p. 64.

44. Quoted in PAC Bulletin No. 1 Wednesday November 6, 1946, p. 1, this proto political party was the first in the country to employ this with reference to the working people. See Nehusi, Ph.D. Dissertation.

45. Peake, "The Development..." in Momsen, Women and Change... p. 115.

46. Jagan, The West on Trial..., also R. Premdas, 'The Rise of the First Mass Based Multi Racial Party in Guyana.' (Georgetown: University of Guyana, 1974.) p. 2; and Nehusi Ph.D. Dissertation, p. 200.

47. Jagan, The West On Trial..., p. 107.

48. Ronaldo Munck, The New International Labour Studies An Introduction. (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1988.) p. 206, for example, Mandel argues that 'we are still witnessing a growth and not a decline in the "world proletariat."' in E. Mandel, "Marx, The Present Crisis and the Future of Labour." Socialist Register 1985/86.

49. Sidney W. Mintz, "The Origins of Reconstituted Peasantries." in H. Beckles and V. Shepherd, (eds.) Caribbean Freedom Economy and Society From Emancipation to the Present. (London: James Currey Publishers, 1993.) p. 97.

50. Ibid., pp. 97-98.

51. G.E.M. De Ste. Croix, The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World: From the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd., 1981.) p. 41.

52. Munck, The New International... p. 207.

53. Ibid., quoted in L. Trotsky, The Permanent Revolution. Results and Prospects. (London: New Park, 1971.) p. 195, 225 and 9.

54. Munck, The New International... p. 207, see also chapter ii.

55. Ibid., p. 207.

56. Ibid., p. 208. quoted in E. Laclau, " *New Social Movements and the Plurality of the Social,*" in D. Slater (ed.) New Social Movements and the State in Latin America. (Amsterdam: CEDLA, 1985.) p. 31.

57. Munck, p. 212.

58. Ibid., quoted in D.L. Seth, " *Grass-Roots Stirrings and the Future of Politics.*" Alternatives, IX, p. 3.

59. Munck, The New International... pp. 212-213.

60. B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin (eds.), The Post-Colonial Studies Reader. (London and New York: Routledge, 1995.) p. 152.

61. Chidi Amuta, ' *Fanon, Cabral and Ngugi on National Liberation.*' in *ibid.* p. 160.

62. Ibid., pp. 60-61.

APPENDIX I.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE AND ANALYSIS OF DOCUMENTS:

Guyana and the Caribbean.

The decision to undertake this study was taken in Guyana when the Ruimveldt Workers' Incident of 1924 was identified as a topic of investigation for the Degree of Master of Arts at the University of Guyana. The research which was undertaken, gave rise to a series of graduate seminar papers. Two of these papers were published in the *History Gazette* of the University of Guyana.

In Guyana, main repositories consulted were the Caribbean Research Library (CRL) of the University of Guyana and the Guyana National Archives. In addition, materials from other libraries and departments were examined. Among these are the *National Library*, Georgetown; the *Caricom Library*, Bank of Guyana Building Georgetown; the *Archives of the Mayor and City Council*, Georgetown; documents stored at the *Guyana Parliament Buildings* and a series of interviews conducted with ex-estate workers on the East Bank of Demerara.

The investigation at the National Archives was facilitated by a period of attachment to that department from my substantive post of graduate teacher with the Ministry of Education. In this position I gained meaningful access to the materials housed in this department.

Part of the collection consists of preserved bound volumes of the Governor's Despatches. These are the printed or manuscript copies of correspondence between Governors of Guiana and the Secretary of State for the Colonies, in London. There are also

bound volumes of Letter Books, Minutes of the Combined Court and Court of Policy and Blue Books of Statistics. Among the collection are a number of unbound Reports and letters on a range of issues. The newspaper collection includes most of the major issues published in the country.

There are gaps in the Governors' Despatches, several years are missing from the collection. Some issues of the early newspapers are in a poor state of preservation and cannot be used by the public. It is usually difficult to locate letters and reports which are not bound. Like some of the newspapers, many of these are badly defaced through inappropriate storage.

The pressing needs of this department are in the area of an organised system of conservation and storage, effective cataloguing of items and a suitable building to house the archives. The recent visit by the Archivist to the PRO for the purpose of studying their system of classification and conservation, along with the Guyana government's undertaking to erect a new complex for the documents on the Campus of the Cyril Potter College of Education at Turkeyen, are promising developments.

A number of newspaper publications and files were examined at the National Archives of Antigua and Saint Lucia, West Indies. This was to explore the regional patterns of working people's resistance during the 1920s and 30s.

The United Kingdom.

In the United Kingdom, an attempt was made to bridge the gaps discovered in the documents at the Guyana National Archives and also to extend the scope of my research in preparation for

this dissertation. The principal archives consulted were the *Public Record Office* and the TUC Collection at the *Modern Records Centre*, University of Warwick. However, the main collection of some Universities and Colleges in the London area proved to be helpful.

Among these are the following: the *Main Library*, University of Warwick; the *Central Library*, School of Oriental and African Studies; the *Main Library*, University of London, Senate House; *Library* of the School of Latin American Studies, University of London; *the British Library*; *the British Library Newspaper Library*, Colindale; *the Library* of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London; the *Main Library*, College of North- West London; the *Main Library*, The Community College Hackney, Keltan House and the *Main Library*, John Kelly Boys Technical College.

The documents examined at the Modern Records Centre, consist mainly of files of correspondence between British TUC officials and labour leaders and other officials in Guyana and the Caribbean. These correspondence consist of printed records of transactions and manuscript of original letters and circular.

The materials are listed under the series (MSS 292/...)- the Archives' classification for the original TUC international correspondence. The documents at the MRC proved particularly useful in chapter vi which examines the role of the TUC in collaboration with the Colonial Office in the development of trade unions in Guiana. These documents are well preserved and are easily accessible through the efficiency of a dedicated staff.

The Public Record Office.

In a significant way, the documents at the Public Record Office complement those at the Guyana National Archives. Many of the missing volumes from the Guyana collection are to be found at the PRO. The Governors' Despatches are listed under the class (C.O.111/....). Despatches are listed for the separate counties Demerara, Essequibo and Berbice, before 1803. After that year, they are listed under the colony of British Guiana. The period between 1781 and 1951 is adequately covered. From December 1926, Governors' Despatches are shelved in classified files. A register of these and their classification number can be found in the 'Registers of Correspondence' which are listed under (C.O.345/...) Registers for the early to mid nineteenth century, are classified under (C.O.326/...)

Correspondences from the Secretary of State are classified under (C.O.112/...); Sessional Papers of the Court of Policy and Combined Court (C.O.114/...); British Guiana Blue Books of Statistics and the Department's British Guiana Newspaper collection (C.O.116/...) and British Guiana Official Gazette (C.O.115/...).

The collection of Governors Despatches at the PRO has a number of advantages over similar documents in the Guyana National Archives. The majority of the volumes at the PRO contain *enclosures* which give additional information on the matter being discussed. These include maps, photographs, newspaper cuttings or letters containing information relating to a decision taken or follow up action. On the other hand, the Despatches at the Guyana National Archives are generally copies of the

correspondence which make reference to the enclosures.

In addition, the C.O.111/... series of the PRO, includes the comments and instructions issued by Colonial Office functionaries on behalf of the Secretary of State. The Despatches also contain letters and other correspondence which were directed to the Colonial Office from British Members of Parliament, TUC officials, members of trade unions and other functionaries in Britain.

A number of the C.O.111/... files are missing from the PRO records. The reason given is that some files were mistakenly destroyed by fire when the department attempted to clear its Archives of unwanted materials. A second explanation can be found in the claim that the filing process of many materials is incomplete because of disruption of the Department's routine due to a major renovation project which is in progress.

The Newspaper Archives.

The newspaper library at Colindale contains most of the major publications from Guyana. Although many of the earlier issues are on microfilm, others are not and are therefore in a poor state. Generally, these publications cover the period between the 1830s to the 1960s. In this dissertation, this source of information provides useful evidence for much of the analysis. Because of a poorly developed historiography, the existing books and other secondary sources on Guyana and the Caribbean do not adequately cover much of the issues under investigation.

Oral Sources.

During December 1988 a series of interviews were conducted by the writer with retired estate workers on the East Bank Demerara. It was possible to meet these workers at Plantation Diamond where they were attending a series of activities organised on their behalf by the estate management.

The objective of the interviews was to establish how much information was retained by the estate workers and other residents of the East Bank, on the Ruimveldt workers' of 1924. Many of the workers interviewed were not able to identify any existing structure for the retention and handing down information through oral tradition. What came out from the discussion is, at best, an impressionistic recollection of events, based largely on stories told by parents and other members of the society. A few of the workers were very young during the incident and were employed in the 'creole gang.' These workers were able to recall aspects of the activities which they witnessed.

Because of the possibility of inaccuracy, the oral sources were not employed as the basis for interpretation. Where reference is made to this source the main purpose is to give a general impression of the mood of the workers during the events and also to corroborate accounts from other sources.

The Course of Study.

The atmosphere at the University of Warwick is pleasing and conducive to creative work. In particular, the Graduate School and the *Department of Politics and International Studies* were able to create much of the physical requirements and an efficient information network to facilitate research and investigation at

a satisfactory level. The reliable computer network, specially reserved photocopiers for postgraduate students and the postgraduate reading room, added to the comfort and minimised the demands of studying at this institution.

From the beginning my supervisors embarked upon the task of making my stay comfortable and academically stimulating. Meetings were conducted in pleasant surroundings and discussions stimulating and meaningful.

Support and assistance often went beyond the required professional and academic responsibilities. Enquiries about my welfare on and off campus and the willingness to lend support in a range of issues are just a few examples of their implicit belief in the importance of student welfare in the pursuit of academic excellence.

APPENDIX II.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:

BROWN, ANDREW BENJAMIN. (May 12, 1857-9 January, 1939.)

Born at Den Amstel, West Coast Demerara to African creole parents.

Training and Education: Den Amstel L.M.S.School; Bishop's College for Teachers; and Middle Temple (London).

He served as Primary School teacher (St. Mark's Scots School, La Retraite, West Bank Demerara.); Barrister at Law from July 1890-1939; Legal Advisor to British Guiana Congregational Union for many years; absentee proprietor of claims in the gold fields, (part owner with Mr. Gonsalves, later Mayor of Georgetown) of Plantation Middlesex, Canal No. 2, West Bank Demerara.

He participated in the revival of the British Guiana Teachers Association (1888); was a leading member of the British Guiana Congregational Union (elected Chairman from 1921); Manager of Congregational school 20 years; Member of the Court of Policy 24 years; Member of the Board of Education for 11 years; Patron of Lodge Young People's Association.

First elected to the Court of Policy for West Demerara in 1892 on the platform of the British Guiana Constitutional Reform Association. Retired from politics after his defeat in 1921 general election. He retained the title 'Honourable' for life.

[1]

BRITTON, HILDRED AARON.

Sanitary Inspector attached to the Georgetown Town Council; editor and manager of The Tribune, a radical working people's

newspaper.

Councillor, Plaisance Village Council; Chairman, Plaisance Farming Association; Treasurer, Plaisance Co-operative Credit Bank; Vice President, British Guiana Farmers Association.

Served as a Special Constable during the Ruimveldt Incident and gave evidence at the Inquiry. [2]

CRITCHLOW, HUBERT NATHANIEL.

Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow was born in Georgetown on December 18, 1884. His father, James Nathaniel Critchlow settled in Guiana from the West Indian island of Barbados. Critchlow senior worked as a wharf foreman with Bookers Bros. Ltd.-one of the leading companies in the country. Critchlow's mother was Julia Elizabeth Critchlow, born Daniels, from the Essequibo Coast.

Critchlow attended the Bedford Wesleyan Primary School (in Georgetown) up to the fourth standard. He left school at the age of fourteen because his father had died and he felt that he had an obligation to take care of his mother. Although his academic school record is quite ordinary, in the field of athletics, his prowess overshadowed all his school mates.

After school he developed into a popular sportsman. He was the colony's middle-distance champion (1905-14). He represented the Malteenoes Club both at cricket and football.

After a number of odd jobs such as apprentice at the Demerara Foundry, Cigar packing and bottle washing, he entered the waterfront as a dock labourer. It was in this department that he made his most outstanding contribution to the organisation of workers and the development of trade unionism in Guiana and the

Caribbean.

Throughout his career in the labour, he was supported by his mother. For him, she was a tower of strength, comforting, encouraging and supporting him as he oscillated from success to adversity, failure, disappointment and reward. He died a bachelor on May 10, 1958. [3]

DARGAN, PATRICK.

Coloured creole. Barrister at Law; racehorse owner; Secretary; D'Urban Race Club; Shareholder: British Guiana Bank; Interest in the gold industry; Publisher, The Creole.

Member of the British Guiana Constitutional Reform Association; President, British Guiana Progressive Association. Member of the Legislature. The most dominant politician in his era; played a significant role in the campaign for a change in the constitution in 1891 which released new forces in the political life of the country and gave the public-spirited colonists their opportunity. [4]

EDUN, AYUBE.

Jeweller and author. Founder and President of the Man Power Citizens Association. Launched Guiana Review (Weekly) and Labour Advocate, weekly organ of the MPCA. Very influential in politics from the 1930s. [5]

FRANK, (REV.) ROBERT, T.

African Creole Congregational Minister. Executive Member, New Amsterdam Young People Improvement Society. Studied at Congregational Institute, England.

Formed Independent Congregational Church at Bread Street,

New Amsterdam. Later he established branches on the East Coast and West Coast Demerara. Publisher and Secretary, 'The People' Newspaper Co. Ltd. Leading member, Young Guianese Party.

Instrumental in the formation of the BGLU branches in Berbice. Executive member of the BGLU and foremost political radical in the first two decades of the century. Delivered political messages from the pulpit. [6]

GLASGOW, (REV.) F.C.

African creole. Congregational Minister. Served as Chairman, British Guiana Congregational Union; Trained Teacher (Mico Training College, Antigua); Schoolmaster from 1864-1870. In charge of nine schools at Canal Nos. 1 and 2, and East Coast Demerara (B.V., Buxton and Plaisance). Chairman, Bagotsville Village Council; Leading member of British Guiana Village Chairmen's Conference; B.G. Farmers Association; Young People's Improvement Association. [7]

GRIFFITH, JOHN LUCIE.

African creole. Leading radical lower middle class politician 1900-1930s. Instrumental in the formation of the BGLU. During 1921, he was instrumental, in his capacity as representative of the Farmers section of the BGLU, in mobilising workers to meet the crisis of wage reduction and retrenchment.

Famous for his captivating oratory, he was one of the main speakers at the numerous workers gatherings during the 1924 Workers' Incident. [8]

KAWALL, FRANCIS.

Leading businessman in Georgetown in the 1920s. He played

an active role in East Indian welfare. His business premises in the city was a regular meeting place of East Indian workers from the country districts.

During 1924 he was instrumental in organising a series of public and house meetings for the purpose of briefing the Estate workers [mainly on the East Bank of Demerara] on matters relating to labour issues. He was the President of the British Guiana East Indian Association during the Ruimveldt Incident. Played an important role as a mediator between the workers and the military personnel at Ruimveldt bridge. [9]

LUCKHOO, EDWARD ALBERT.

Son of Mr. Moses Luckhoo, merchant of New Amsterdam. Articled clerk for three years to Mr. Mc Kinnon. Participated in the 1916 elections. Later, he became a leading member of the Legislature and the legal profession. [10]

LUCKHOO, JOSEPH ALEXANDER.

Brother of Edward Albert. Barrister at Law. Only successful East Indian contestant in 1916 election. First East Indian elected to Legislature (Financial Representative for Western Essequibo). Member, People's Association. Member, B.G. Board of Education. President, British Guiana East Indian Association. Member, Executive Committee, Indian Colonial Society of Madras. Delegate of East Indian section of British Guiana Colonisation scheme. [11]

OGLE, McLEAN.

African creole. Teacher (Bishop's College). Barrister at Law. Independent Reformer, then Member of British Guiana

Progressive Association. [12]

OGLE, SAMUEL WHITNEY.

Brother of MoLean. Headmaster (Bishop's College). Secretary, British Guiana Native Progressive Union (Buxton). Village leader of Buxton/Friendship. Leading member of BGCRA and BGPA. [13]

THORNE, ALFRED ATHIEL.

Born August 14th 1871 in Barbados, educated at Lodge School and Codrington College, (affiliated to Durham University). He obtained his M.A. Degree from Durham University. Thorne first came to prominence in Barbados when in 1890 he challenged the Board of Education of the island in the Supreme Court for its 'very peculiar' award of the Colonial Scholarship which he claimed to have won on the Open Scholarship Standard of Colleges at Oxford and Cambridge. His challenge along with popular support led to a change in the law which required thereafter that the Barbados Scholar must be selected and named by the examiners at Cambridge University on the merits of the candidates solely.

In 1890 he went to Guiana. There he immediately joined the Reform Association which was then in the process of petitioning the Queen in council for a change in the country's constitution from the Dutch inherited system.

Became the leading writer for the Echo (one of the leading working peoples' newspapers) the principal organ fighting for change. Constitutional change took effect late in 1891. For the first time, the people of Guiana had the right to vote for members of the legislature-although the property qualification remained and proved to be beyond the reach of many of the working people.

In 1894 Thorne started the 'Middle School' as a Secondary Grammar School with the object of bringing Secondary education within the reach of the masses to whom it had been previously denied. In the same year, he persuaded Benjamin Howell Jones, a planter Member of the Court of Policy and proprietor of three sugar estates in the colony, to get *PRIMARY SCHOLARSHIPS CREATED WHEREBY DESERVING BOYS AND GIRLS FROM PRIMARY AIDED OR UNAIDED SCHOOL COULD GO TO THE QUEEN'S COLLEGE FOR BOYS OR THE URSULINE CONVENT SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.*

In 1898 his pen induced another Planter Member of the Court of Policy, Edward Chauncey Luard, an Etonian, to get an amendment in the Constitution by introducing the Ballot.

In the general elections of 1896, he used his influence with the Echo and numerous public appearance to influence public opinion. He was instrumental in the election of A.B.Brown, an African.

In 1902 was elected unopposed as Town Councillor for Georgetown. His main concern was with the housing problem in the city. In 1904 he visited the USA where he observed the State Schools and Colleges.

In 1905, he played an important role in the Ruimveldt workers' incident. In collaboration with Mr John Wood Davis and Dr Rohlehr, he was able to influence Governor Hodgson to stop the Police shooting and to allow the workers to take part in mass meetings. [14]

WEBER, ALBERT RAYMOND FORBES.

Born in the West Indian island of Tobago on New Years Day 1879. Came to Guiana around 1910 through an uncle, S.E.R.Forbes,

a partner of the Firm Crosby and Forbes Extensive Traders of Bartica and in other parts of the interior of the colony.

Figured in many walks of life: Elected Financial Representative in the Combined Court for West Berbice in 1921; re-elected in 1926 and 1930. He played a significant role in resisting the change of the Constitution (Crown Colony) in 1928, he was a member of the 'Constitution Delegation' which went to England to protest this change.

He attended in England THE WEST INDIAN CONFERENCE in 1926, and THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH LABOUR CONFERENCE in 1930. Championed many a cause within and outside the Combined Court. Held a seat as Councillor in the Georgetown Municipality for the Kingston Ward for about three years. (He was a forceful and charismatic speaker.)

His services were sought by government and given willingly on a number of important bodies which included: THE COLONISATION COMMITTEE; THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE, THE SMALL FARMERS COMMITTEE and THE CANAL POLDER AUTHORITY.

Other offices included: Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society; Member of the Institute of Journalists; Artilleryman in the British Guiana Local Forces; Known throughout the Caribbean for his sympathy for the Movement for West Indian Federation; Company Secretary to the Peters Mine-a prosperous gold producing company-Also the Mara Gold Company. While serving with these mining concerns, he was brought in close proximity to many hinterland communities. This experience proved to be of significant value in his political career and also his writing on several aspects of life in Guiana.

He was connected with the " Advertising Department" of the Daily Argosy. Later, he left to join the firm of Bookers Brothers and Co. Ltd., as 'Advertising Agent.' This gave him valuable knowledge and exposure to the public, which stood him in good stead as the successful politician and journalist which he became.

In 1919 he was appointed Editor of the Daily Chronicle. Between 1926 and 1930 he served as Editor of the New Daily Chronicle and Manager of the Demerara Leather and Boot Factory. He supported and made valuable contribution to the following organisations: The Georgetown Shorthand Writers Association (Honorary President); YMCA; The Young Men's Improvement Association; Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association.

His major publication was A Centenary History of British Guiana. [15]

FOOTNOTES

1. See Edith M. Brown, The Life Story of Andrew Benjamin Brown. (Georgetown: B.G Lithographic Co. Ltd., n.d.)
2. For details see " The Ruimveldt Inquiry Into the Workers Incident of 1924..."
3. Chase, A History of... and Archie Codrington, " Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow: The Father of Trade Unionism in the British Empire." (Georgetown, n.d.)
4. Rodney, A History of..., also W.W. Evans, *Biographical Portraits* (Georgetown, n.d. [ca. 1909]).
5. See Nehusi PhD. dissertation.
6. For details on the activities of the Rev. Frank, see Chase, A History of Trade Unionism... and Rodney, A History of...
7. Ibid.
8. Chase, A History of Trade Unionism...
9. " The Ruimveldt Inquiry..."
10. See Nehusi, PhD. dissertation.
11. Ibid.
12. W.W.Evans, *Biographical Portraits...*
13. Ibid.
14. Alfred Athiel Thorne: Biographical Sketch, in TUC File: MSS 292/972. 8/1., 11 July 1939.
15. The Daily Chronicle, June 30, 1932.

APPENDIX III

SOME NOTABLE GOVERNORS WHO SERVED IN BRITISH GUIANA DURING THE PERIOD 1882-1935:

IRVING, HENRY, T. (1882-1887)

Governor Irving assumed duty in May 1882. From a very early period in his administration, he displayed unusual concern and judgement in dealing with environmental problems. He was the first Governor to successfully urge the Legislature to vote funds for village drainage and sanitation.

In spite of this concern for village development, Irving was firm in his view that the autonomy which the villagers enjoyed in the administration of village works be curtailed. He was regarded as a 'benevolent despot' with an *a priori* hostility to any exercise of democracy on the part of a colonised people. He was willing to forgo local taxation in exchange for total control of the colonial state at all levels.

SENDALL, Sir WALTER, J. (1898-1901)

One of the highlights of Governor Sendall's administration was the mandate given to him by the West India Royal Commission in 1897. His task was to create a Board of Agriculture under which model and School Gardens came into being in Guiana. A special aspect of this development was the mounting of regular Agricultural Exhibition.

Governor Sendall's efficiency was hampered by the fact that when he began his administration in Guiana, he was already advanced in years. Due to ill health, he found it taxing and at times, difficult to travel around the colony to get first hand information in order to execute his policies. His declining

health was a crucial factor in the decision of the Colonial Office to grant him permission to retire before the expiration of the usual term Governors were required to serve in the West Indies.

SWETTENAM, Sir JAMES, A. (1901-1904)

Sir James Swettenam succeeded Governor Sendall. From the start he proved to be an active administrator, travelling to many areas of the colony. In this way he was able to obtain at first hand, useful information relating to the development needs of the various communities. Sir James was known for his impartiality and interest in peasant farming and village activities. This made him very popular among the people.

Assisted by his Colonial Secretary, Mr (later Sir) A.M. Ashmore, he made far reaching changes in the Public Service. For example setting a standard of qualification for admission to the Civil Service by making promotions be given according to merit and by retiring numerous 'drones' who had got their promotions by back door influences.

HODGSON, Sir FREDERICK MITCHELL. (1904-1912)

Before assuming the office of Governor, Hodgson served in the capacity of Post Master General in Guiana during 1882 and also Governor of Barbados. His connections in Guiana, along with his weak character, enabled the planters to nullify to a great extent, much of the progress made on behalf of the working people under previous Governors such as Swettenam.

Hodgson fraternised freely and promiscuously with the planters and the merchants who regarded him as one of their number. In this way he forfeited the confidence and respect of

the general public through his obvious partiality. He commanded little respect among the working people. Throughout his administration he demonstrated that he was unreliable and incapable of making independent decision.

One of the greatest blunders of his administration was the way he dealt with the workers' incident of 1905. This incident gave Hodgson the opportunity to affirm in no uncertain term where the Chief Executive stood in relation to the contending classes.

The nature of his intervention was so obviously pro-planter that the Daily Chronicle was forced to refer to him as " a bigoted partisan of the planter interests." This comment was prompted in the light of Hodgson taking the decision to reverse a commitment made by a group of planters to favourably consider wage demands made by workers.

The Governor's action was questioned by the Secretary of State. In a letter, the Colonial Office expressed its concern that the Governor in Guiana was taking decisions that made it appeared that he was concerned only with the interests of the planters, and that workers' claims were not being considered. In spite of this observation, Hodgson was retained as Governor beyond the usual time given to senior colonial officers.

It should be said, however, that Governor Hodgson's greatest impact was felt in the non-controversial areas of sanitation and Prison Reform.

EGERTON, Sir WALTER. (July 1912)

Sir Walter took over the administration from Sir Chas Cox who acted during the interregnum. His first task after taking office, was to take up the case involving Sprostons Ltd., which

emerged during Cox's short term. This case involved the contract held by Messrs Sprostons Ltd., to provide steamer service across the Demerara, Berbice and Essequibo rivers and to the North West and Bartica.

The attempt to renew this contract during Sir Chas' administration was challenged by Governor Egerton because of the marriage of Sir Chas' daughter to the son of the principal shareholder of Sprostons. This move was unprecedented at a time when a high degree of co-operation between the Governor and the capitalist class was commonplace.

As a part of the investigation, Sir Walter took the unusual step to address letters to the local press outlining various details of the issue. In addition, a new scheme of colonial steamer service was implemented. This development saw a reduction in the cost of freight transportation and passenger service. These became more reliable and steps were taken to promote development along.

In the height of his popularity, Governor Egerton addressed the question of the hinterland railway.

COLLETT, Sir WILFRED. (1917-23)

Sir Wilfred Collett took up the post of Governor in Guiana shortly after the 1916 election which saw a number of black and coloured professionals elected to the legislature. The Governor was not well received by several of the electives who were of the opinion that the Colonial Office, in selecting him to preside over the destiny of a first class colony by the agreement of 1911, had not kept faith with the colony. They saw the Governor's appointment as a form of punishment for the colony.

In spite of this beginning, Sir Walter, later in his administration, developed a reputation for his strict impartiality, shrewd business capacity, and willingness to consult with the members of the Court of Policy-often in an unofficial capacity. In this way, he was able to gain the confidence and esteem of the electives and the inhabitants of the country.

He got rid of the worthless and iniquitous *Sea Defence Contract* and by personal supervision, effected numerous economies and saved the colony a considerable sum of money on sea defence works through the creation of a Sea Defence Department and carefully monitoring its activities and expenditure. Governor Collett assumed the active charge of checking profiteering by assuming direct responsibility for the fixing of prices of essential commodities and controlling export of those locally produced. In this way, he was able to make ineffective Mr. Clementi's 'Control Committee' which was largely controlled by the merchants.

These activities made the Governor very unpopular with the Chamber of Commerce and the merchants. A number of planters and businessmen launched a campaign to discredit his administration and influence the Colonial Office to recall him. However, this campaign was unsuccessful largely because the Governor was very popular among the citizens.

Part of his popularity was due to his humane approach to working people's problems. He created the avenue for workers to state their case through intermediaries nominated from their ranks. He used his office to get the employers to meet workers

in conference organised specially to explore acceptable solution to labour related issues.

His contribution to the development of Primary and Secondary education ranked very highly among the people. The view was expressed that he " had done better for the colony in this respect than any previous Governor within the memory of the oldest living inhabitant. " His critics blamed him for the decline of the rice industry.

THOMSON, Sir GRAEME. (April 1923)

Governor Thomson was in charge of the administration during the workers' incident at Ruimveldt. Throughout his administration, he came into conflict with the elected members of the government. He openly expressed the opinion that many of the members were unsuitable for the task of representing the people. For example he saw Mr. A.R.F. Webber, Financial Representative for Berbice and Editor of the Daily Chronicle as a coloured man of undoubted ability " but wholly venal and unscrupulous and devoid of any ambition other than to get what he can from the highest bidder in return for his support..." Mr Cnonn who served as Mayor of Georgetown, was presented as " ...an ignorant and opinionated man in bad financial circumstances..." Mr. Da Silva was " an uneducated Portuguese, recently convicted and fined for gambling..." and " Mr. Woolford... a coloured barrister who has for some time past been in serious financial difficulties...He is a man of ability with an English University education but devoid of any stability of character."

Governor Thomson was a man of strong prejudice against 'all men of colour' and insisted that senior Colonial Officials should

be European. In a significant way, such attitude influenced the way he dealt with the workers' incident at Ruimveldt. He supported the call for a change in the constitution in order to increase the power of the Governor and the official section of the legislature. He supported selective importation of Chinese and Javanese in the colonisation scheme.

Among the Governors who served after 1924 were: Sir Cecil Hunter Rodwell, August 31, 1925; Brig. Gen. Sir F. Gordon Guggisberg, November 7, 1928; Sir Edward Denham June 9, 1930; Sir Gas. Northcote, March 26, 1935; and Sir Wilfred Jackson, November, 1937.

Source: See [PRO] C.O.111/656, also Colonial Office List.

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